POWER STRUGGLE IN THE HINDU KUSH

Afghanistan (1978-1991)

Lt.Gen.(Retd) Kamal Matinuddin



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Lt. Gen. (Retd) Kamal Matinuddin
HI(M), S.Bt.

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To the Afghan men, women and children who have been deprived of peace and tranquility by outside forces and by their own leaders alike.

Dedicated also to my wife, Suraiya, who spent long hours in going through the manuscript and giving me her suggestions, many of which are included in this book.

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FOREWORD

Nearly twelve years have passed since the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, but the havoc that this military action caused in our neighbouring Islamic country, has yet to be repaired. Though the Soviet forces were with drawn more than two years ago, a political solution that would remove the imposed regime which they came to prevent from collapse and have left behind, continues to elude the best efforts of the United Nations and Afghanistan's two most closely involved neighbours - Pakistan and Iran. In consequence, the agony of the people of Afghanistan does not seem about to end.

According to the latest report of the United Nations Office of Humanitarian Assistance Programme for Afghanistan, "The average Afghan has ... reached the point of despair ... Over a million killed, over two million disabled, thousands and thousands of orphans and widows, and standard of living below the line of abject poverty. over five million refugees, and over two million displaced persons in a country which has been suffering total devastation for more than a decade."

Within months of the Soviet military intervention in December, 1979, it fell to me as Foreign Minister to explore, through the Organisation of the Islamic Conference and the United Nations, the possibility of a political solution to the war in Afghanistan with a view to bringing about the withdrawal of the Soviet forces and the replacement of the communist Kabul regime by an interim neutral administration that would enable the Afghan people to exercise freely their right to self determination and choose their own form of government.

The Babrak Karmal regime refused talks on an equal footing with the *Mujahideen* under the good offices of the Foreign Ministers of Pakistan, Iran and the Secretary General of the OIC. Pakistan then turned to the General Assembly of the United Nations for the adoption of a resolution that would call for the withdrawal of the Soviet forces from Afghanistan and enable the Afghan people to choose their own form of government. General Assembly resolution 35/37 of 20 November, 1980 which was adopted by 111 votes in favour, 22 against and 12 abstentions, enshrined these proposals and requested the Secretary General to appoint a mediator to implement the resolution. Pakistan was

able to get a massive vote against the Soviet military intervention by projecting the Afghanistan crisis as an issue between the third world countries and the Soviet Union and not an East-West issue.

It took seven years to negotiate the Geneva Accords through the good offices of the UN representative, laying down a time-table of ten months for the pull-out of the Soviets from Afghanistan. The withdrawal was completed by February 15, 1989.

The question of interim or transitional government was not pursued simultaneously in the negotiations in the expectation that once the Soviet forces were withdrawn, the Kabul regime would collapse. It was in this mistaken belief that throughout 1987, no serious thought was given by the Pakistan as well as the *Mujahideen* sides to the need for negotiations on an interim government. The Najibullah regime, though none too stable, still survives.

For the last two years the *Mujahideen*, backed by Pakistan and their other allies, have tried to pursue a military solution but with little success. The military stalemate that continues to obtain has at last forced Pakistan and Iran and the other supporters of the *Mujahideen* to turn seriously towards a political settlement of the twelve-year long conflict.

As the Resistance has remained much too divided to arrive at a consensus on power - sharing and the composition of an interim broadbased government, the United Nations Secretary General has put forward a five-point proposal for a transitional arrangement for holding elections which might serve as a basis for a political settlement "acceptable to the vast majority of the Afghan people". This proposal of May 21, 1991, has found support among the governments of Pakistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United States and the Soviet Union as well. The Najibullah regime has welcomed it, but the great majority of the *Mujahideen* factions while recognising some positive elements in the Secretary General's proposal, reject any dialogue, much less power - sharing with the *Mujahideen* regime. Instead, all but two of the *Mujahideen* parties based in Peshawar and Tehran wish to put forward their own form of a transitional mechanism within the next two months.

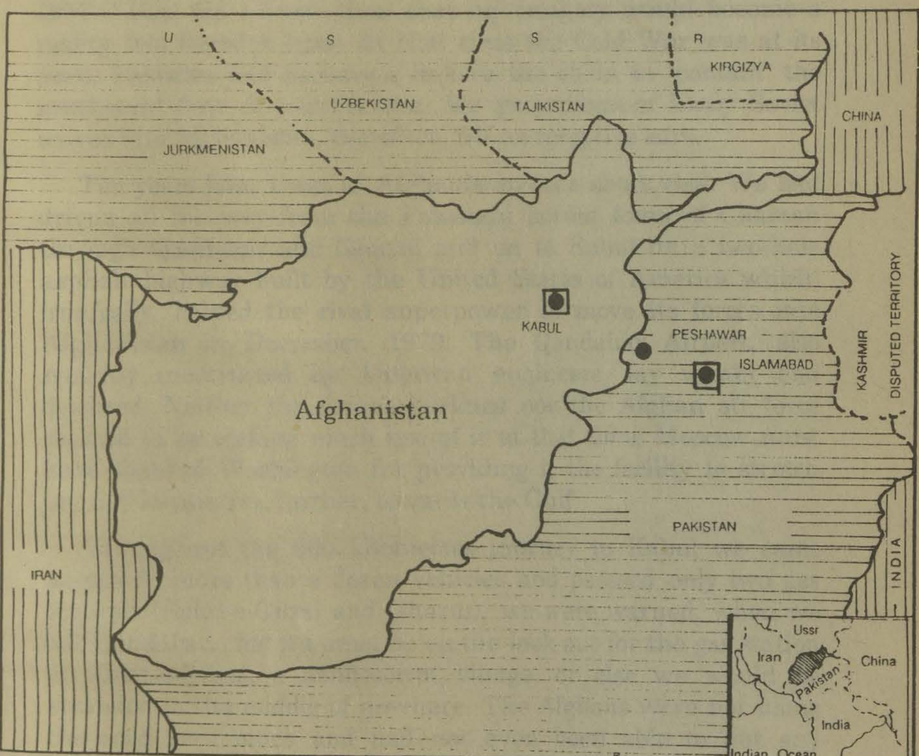
Given the deep splits among the various resistance factions, it is by no means certain that they would be able to deliver a

consensus that would be acceptable to the vast majority of the Afghan people. Time is running out for the *Mujahideen*. The United States and the Soviets are likely to stop arms supplies to their respective allies. Negative symmetry would then come into force which would be more severely felt by the *Mujahideen* than by Kabul. Humanitarian aid to the Afghan refugees, already slashed, could be further reduced. And Pakistan would find the continuing burden of their care and sustenance unbearable. With Afghanistan mired in a desultory and inconclusive civil war, it would be a long time before it would count in the geopolitics of a region which is in flux from the collapse of Soviet power and the post-Gulf war order that is taking shape.

Lieutenant General (Retd) Kamal Matinuddin's book deals in depth with the political and military dimensions of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan mentioned above, in particular the jehad of the *Mujahideen* and Pakistan's role in relation to their heroic struggle. His work is based on wide-ranging research and his observations and conclusions reflect his rich experience of carrying out strategic studies. Altogether, "Power Struggle in the Hindu Kush", (Afghanistan - 1978-1991) will be a source of enlightenment to the general reader as well as the scholar and a significant contribution towards a deeper understanding of a watershed event in the history of the second half of this century when the expansion of Soviet power and influence was turned into the beginning of a process of rapid retrenchment from Asia to Africa to Europe.

Agha Shahi
Former Foreign Minister
of Pakistan

AFGHANISTAN AND SURROUNDING AREAS



Preface

My interest in Afghanistan began 33 years ago when, as a student at the Canadian Army Staff College, I chose the geo-political situation in Afghanistan as the topic of my lecture, which all of us had to deliver at the end of the course. I vividly remember displaying a map of Central Asia with a red cloud hovering over Afghanistan and little drops of red rain falling into it. That was in 1957. Little did I know then that my imagery would become a reality two decades later. At that time the Cold War was at its peak. Pakistan had become a link in the chain to 'contain' the southward flow of communism. My projections of likely Soviet moves into Afghanistan, therefore, fell on receptive ears.

Ten years later I was in Afghanistan on a short visit. We had driven all the way from the Pakistani border town of Chaman through Qandahar and Ghazni and on to Kabul on a two-lane asphalt highway built by the United States of America which, ironically, helped the rival superpower to move its forces into Afghanistan in December, 1979. The Qandahar Airport, also recently constructed by American engineers, lay vacant and deserted. Neither the Ariana Airlines nor the Afghan air force seemed to be making much use of it at that time. Moscow must have thanked Washington for providing it the facility to stretch out 500 kilometres, further, towards the Gulf.

Throughout the 600 kilometres journey to Kabul we came across no more than a dozen vehicles and passsed only two gas stations (Kalat-e-Gilzai and Ghazni). we were warned, when we left Qandahar, that we must be on the look out for the gas station at Kalat-e-Gilzai, a nondescript village, or else we would be stranded in the middle of nowhere. The Afghans were not using the road very much and had not even been able to put any milestones on their foreign built national highways. We also went to see the newly constructed Salang tunnel, 100 kilometres north of Kabul. Russian engineers had bored through the massive Hindu Kush range at a height of 11,000 feet to link the Soviet town of Termez, on the River Oxus, to Kabul - thus shortening the time to reach the Afghan capital from their border by several hours. It was obvious then that such a heavy outlay on building the communication infrastructure by both the superpowers in so poor a country was more for strategic reasons, than for its economic development.

My visit also helped me in grasping the harshness of the

terrain faced by all those who have sought to gain military ascendancy over the fiercely independent tribes. Most parts of the country are ideally suited for guerilla operations.

My involvement with the current developments in Afghanistan began soon after the pro-Marxist coup d' etat in April, 1978. The communist takeover had added a new dimension to our national security which needed constant appraisal. As the Director General Joint Staff (DGJS) at the Joint Staff Headquarters (JSHQ) (1976-1981) I was responsible for preparing threat assessments in conjunction with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. A study of the intentions and capabilities of the new Soviet supported regime became one of my main responsibilities.

After the Soviet invasion the JSHQ became the venue of a number of high level military meetings chaired by the late President General Zia-ul-Haq (as Chief of Army Staff). In my capacity as the senior-most officer at JSHQ at that time I was in a position to assess and to pick up General Zia's views on the Afghanistan issue which I have attempted to reflect in this book.

As Pakistan's Ambassador to Thailand (1981-1985) I visited the Kampuchean refugee camps on the Thai-Cambodian border and noticed the marked difference between Thailand's handling of the 250,000 Kampuchean refugees and the government of Pakistan's approach towards the Afghan refugees.

Subsequently as the Director General of the Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad (1987-89) I attended a large number of local and international seminars both within Pakistan and abroad devoted to the Afghanistan problem. As the editor of the monthly Afghanistan Report I kept myself abreast of the political, economic and military developments within Afghanistan.

My recent visits to Tehran and Moscow in connection with the preparation of this book have helped me to update my knowledge of a country, interest in which began thirty three years ago.

During the course of my research on current developments in Afghanistan I have given greater primacy to interviews with personalities who were present on the scene or who were in a position to take decisions during the various stages of the Afghan conflict. Unlike most other authors I had the advantage of being a Pakistani and being close to the events throughout their shaping. Access to government officials, Afghan leaders, journalists, and foreign correspondents was easier a fact which I was able to make full use of.

In addition to foreign source material I was able to obtain unclassified but reliable information from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, States and Frontier Regions and Interior. The Afghan Information and Documentation Centre at Peshawar and the publications of the various Afghan political parties were very useful. The monthly periodicals of the Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad and of the Institute of Policy Studies also in Islamabad had a wealth of data. I was able to obtain eye witness accounts of the military engagements close to the Pakistani border from those who accompanied the *Mujahideen* into Afghanistan. My frequent visits to the Afghan refugee camps around Peshawar and Quetta put me in touch with several freedom fighters who participated in the battles of Khost, Jalalabad and Qandahar. Discussion with young Afghan students at the Asia Study Centre at Islamabad gave me a good insight into their vision of the future.

The Libraries of the Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabd, the National Defence College, Rawalpindi, the Army Central Library, Rawalpindi and that of the Area Study Centre for Central Asia at the University of Peshawar, have a good collection of material on Afghanistan which I could consult. The State Library of Foreign Literature and the Library of the Institute of Information on Social Sciences, Moscow, provided a wealth of data on Soviet Policies towards Afghanistan.

A major shortcoming in my research was the non-availability of classified material. Understandably so as sufficient time had not elapsed to allow important documents to be made public. Occasionaly I came across contradictory statements by those interviewed which made it difficult to arrive at the facts in some cases. As far as possible I have tried to balance the views expressed.

Prologue

Afghanistan is one of the few countries of the world which escaped the clutches of the imperialist powers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This was possible because of its geographical location, between two expanding empires, and the fiercely independent character of its people.

The British sent their forces into Afghanistan on two occasions (1838 and 1878) as part of their 'Forward Policy' in an attempt to place a friendly ruler in Kabul and to pre-empt Russian moves in the direction of their Indian possessions. On both occasions however, they got a bloody nose and were forced to retreat leaving behind bodies of thousands of their soldiers who sacrificed their lives in vain for their king and country.

The Russians intruded into Afghanistan three times (1837, 1885 and 1929) though on a much smaller scale and were complelled to fall back as they found the going too tough for their liking.

The British and the Russians continued to play this 'Great Game' on the Afghanistan chess board each trying to keep the other out from a territory, which in any case, belonged to neither of them. In the end they found it more cost effective to work out a political arrangement whereby Afghanistan retained its independence and became a buffer state between them.

In the dying decades of the twentieth century a similar game was played by the rival superpowers in an area which each considered vital to its interest and in the process, they involved the regional states as well.

This book analyses the causes and consequences of the induction of the 'limited Soviet military contingent' into Afghanistan in December, 1979. It examines the response of the United States and other nations to this sudden projection of Soviet power in Asia. It looks into the reasons why the *Mujahideen* have not been able to remove the pro-Soviet regime inspite of having achieved the more difficult task of evicting the forces of a superpower from their soil. The impact of the Afghan conflict on Pakistan is the main theme that runs throughout the book. While commenting upon the decisions taken by national authorities I have kept in mind the internal and external pressures prevailing at that time because I do realise that it is easy to criticise events in retrospect.

Acknowledgements

I am deeply grateful to General Mirza Aslam Beg, the Chief of Staff of the Pakistan Army, for the encouragement and assistance he gave me in writing this book. He shared with me, at considerable length, his threat perception from Pakistan's northwestern border. Major General Mian Ahmad Mushtaq Tariq, the Director General, Combat Development, General Headquarters, Pakistan, provided me all the facilities necessary in writing this book. For this I am indebted to him.

Mr. Ghulam Ishaq Khan, the President of Pakistan, was gracious enough to spare me his valuable time and give me the benefit of his views on the Afghan problem. Former Prime Minister Mohammad Khan Junejo, the former Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Zain Noorani was very kind to grant me extensive interviews. Former Foreign Minister Agha Shahi took considerable pains to go through the entire book, for which I am greatly indebted. His comments and suggestions were very useful. I am thankful to Mr. Tanvir Ahmad Khan, former Minister in the Pakistan Embassy in Kabul during the crucial days of the Saur Revolution and later Pakistan's Foreign Secretary for agreeing to exchange views with me on the developments in the region of Southwest Asia.

General Mohammad Iqbal Khan, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee made some very pertinent observations of policy decisions taken at the time of the Soviet invasion.

General Khalid Mahmud Arif and Lieutenant General Syed Refaqat, both of whom were Chiefs of Staff of President Zia-ul-Haq during those crucial times were very helpful in giving me an insight into their views and decisions on the various issues that arose from time to time in connection with the Afghan conflict. Lieutenant General Fazl-e-Haq, Former Governor of the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) and a close associate of President Zia-ul-Haq, was kind enough to send written replies to my questionnaire inspite of his busy political commitments.

Major General Nasirullah Khan Babar, adviser in the government of Mohtarama Benazir Bhutto and a former Inspector General of the Frontier Corps (1972-1974) and Governor of NWFP (1974-1977), related some interesting events not found in books written on Afghanistan so far. Brigadier Amir Gulistan Janjua, the present Governor of the NWFP, extended to me his

fullest cooperation in assessing the impact of the presence of the Afghan refugees on the Tribal Areas of Pakistan and in arranging interviews with the Afghan leaders based in Peshawar. With the kind assistance of Dr. Ijaz Shafi Gilani I was able to meet the members of the Afghan Interim Government and the young Afghan students at his Centre for Asian Studies in Islamabad.

The former Director General of the Inter Services Intelligence Directorate (ISI) of Pakistan, Lieutenant General Hamid Gul deserves my gratitude for his frank, forthright and candid views on the role of the ISI vis-a-vis the Afghan *Mujahideen*.

My special thanks are due to Ambassador Riaz Piracha who was Pakistan's envoy in Kabul during the Taraki and Amin regimes. He not only described the situation then prevailing in Kabul vividly but also helped and guided me with his valuable advice during the writing of this book.

I would like to convey my gratitude to Mr. Abbas Maliki of the Iranian Institute of Political and International Studies and Professor Yuri Gankovsky of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences, Moscow, for inviting me to their respective institutions. I greatly benefitted from the discussions I had with them and their experts on Afghanistan.

I would also like to thank Ambassador Mufti Abbas, Mr. Roedad Khan, Major General Zulfiqar Ali, Mr. Mohammad Taj, Brigadier Said Azhar, Colonel A.M. Babar and Lieutenant Colonel Abdur Rahman Ahmadzai for granting me interviews which have helped me greatly. Mr. Tariq Mahmood, my personal assistant worked long hours to type out the several drafts of the manuscript. Major Nasrullah Khan went through the final draft with great care and helped me in obtaining the various maps, photographs and tables for which I am grateful. It is not possible to name everyone from whose assistance I have benefitted. My thanks to them all.

Needless to add that the responsibility for the views expressed and for the inadequacies of this book remains mine alone.

Rawalpindi

1st September, 1991 **(KAMAL MATINUDDIN)**

PART-I
BACKGROUND

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Geographical Imperatives

Afghanistan is a land locked country in Southwest Asia at the western extremities of the Great Himalayan Range. It covers an area of 796,095 square kilometres which makes it somewhat smaller than Pakistan and a little bigger in size than France[1]. It stretches 1,300 kilometres from the Southwest to the Northeast and has a general width of about 600 kilometres. Shaped like a frying pan its handle forces its way through the Pamirs for a distance of 320 kilometres at heights ranging between 20,000 to 25,000 feet. This narrow stretch of territory known as the Wakhan corridor, was carved out by the British to prevent the Russians from having a direct access to their possessions in India. By doing so they extended Afghanistan's borders eastwards to meet those of China.

Three fourths of the country is either mountainous with jagged peaks and deep ravines or flat and open desert. Only six percent of the land is fit for cultivation. The most dominating physical feature is the Hindu Kush Range (Hindu Killer) and its offshoots. Ibne-Batuta, the famous Muslim traveller and historian of the fourteenth century, crossed the Hindu Kush and gave it its present name because so many Hindu slaves brought from India died while negotiating this formidable physical barrier covered for the most part of the year with snow[2]. Running diagonally across from the Pamirs in the northeast to the Helmand River basin in the southwest this formidable mountain feature virtually divides the country into two as movement across it is restricted to only a few places. Its general elevation is 14,000 feet with numerous peaks rising above 20,000 feet. Only one metalled road cuts through the Hindu Kush via the 2.7 kilometre long Salang Tunnel connecting Kabul to the northern provinces. This engineering marvel was constructed by the Russians in 1964[3] to enable speedier movement between the Soviet town of Termez on the river Oxus to Kabul.

Except for one major highway which joins the capital to the major cities the communication infrastructure in Afghanistan is poor. There are no railway lines and the few roads that exist pass through rugged terrain and narrow defiles giving the Afghan tribesmen ample opportunities to interdict vehicular movement.

The Soviets and Americans had, in the 60's, helped to build a large number of air fields in various provinces which provide a fair measure of strategic mobility.

Afghanistan can be physically divided into four regions: (1) the mountainous region in the east and north which is generally covered with forests and whose valleys yield fruit, wheat and cotton; (2) the flat open desert in the southwest where nothing grows; (3) the central highlands of Hazarajat about which Sir Thomas Holdich remarked in 1904 that there is no more unpromising land in Asia than the windswept home of the Hazara tribe[4], and (4) the northern plains fairly rich in alluvial soil. While flying from Islamabad to Moscow one can see the terrain of Afghanistan below change from rugged and barren hills beyond the Pakistani border, to snow covered mountain ranges, even in May, in central Afghanistan. Just before entering the air space of Tajikistan the fertile plains between the Hindu Kush and the river Oxus break the monotony of endless mountain ridges.

Afghanistan shares a 2,370 kilometre long border with the Soviet Central Asian Muslim Republics of Turkmenistan. Uzbekistan, Tajikistan. For the most part the boundary runs along the navigable Amu Darya (Oxus River) across which the Russians have only recently built two bridges - one at Kushka in the west and the other at Termez in the east. Seventy-Five kilometres of the Pamir Knot, known as the '*bam-e-dunya*', (roof of the world) separates the country from the Sinkiang province of China. The Durand Line, demarcated the boundary between Afghanistan and British India. It forms the frontier today between Afghanistan and Pakistan. The boundary runs most of the way through precipitous mountain ranges over a distance of 2,416 kilometres. In the southwest the desert of Siestan straddles the Iran - Afghan border. Along Afghanistan's western boundary lies the Iranian province of Khorasan.

The boundaries of Afghanistan were formed by the Russians and the British who compressed the ephemeral Durrani Kingdom in the late nineteenth century and gave Afghanistan the shape it has today. It was Great Britain and Russia who, in 1893, agreed, between themselves, that the river Oxus should be the northern frontier of Afghanistan[5]. Again in 1891 Major General C.S. Maclean delineated the boundary between Persia and Afghanistan[6] and two years later Sir Mortimar Durand, Foreign

Secretary of British India, established the frontiers between British India and Afghanistan[7]. The border between Afghanistan and China were strangely enough, also agreed upon between the western imperialist powers[8]. Sir Thomas Holdrich was, therefore, not wrong when he said "we have contributed much to give a national unity to that nebulous community which we call Afghanistan, which Afghans never call by that name, by drawing a boundary around it"[9].

Afghanistan is watered by four major rivers - the Oxus in the north, which rises from Lake Victoria (discovered by Captain Wood in 1838) and drains into the Aral Sea. The Hari Rud in the west, The Helmand in the south and the Kabul in the east. Out of these the Kabul river passes through the capital and flows into Pakistan to shed its waters into the mighty Indus at Attock. The climate is generally dry specially in summer as the southwest monsoons, which provide the much needed rain to the Indian subcontinent, peter out by the time they reach the Hindu Kush. It is bitterly cold in winter with temperatures falling to minus 20 degrees centigrade in the snow covered mountains and excessively hot in summer in the southwestern stony desert of Helmand province. Politically Afghanistan is divided into 29 provinces.

Demographic Characteristics

Afghanistan's population in 1987 was estimated as 15.2 million[10]. Except for a few thousand Hindus and Sikhs who are mainly in Kabul and some other cities the Afghans follow the Islamic faith. Approximately eighty percent of them are Sunnis and the remaining twenty percent belong to the Shia sect[11]. The vast majority of the population live and work on the land. Because of the undeclared war raging in their country, a very large number have been forced to seek shelter in Pakistan and Iran. Many have moved from the countryside to the cities. Kabul, which had a population of one million at the time of the Russian invasion, now has over 3 million people in it. Only 25 percent of the village population is now outside the major towns[12].

Afghans as a people were first referred to in history in the 10th century. Being a Muslim in Afghanistan is taken for granted but what is more signifaicant is to which ethnic group one belongs. Afghan society is broken up into tribes, sub tribes, clans and

families each proud of its genealogy and each considering itself equal if not better than the other. the Afghans admit their inferiority to nobody. Sir Olaf Caroe, the last British Governor of NWFP, who spent a life time with the Pushtuns, respected the Pathan because, according to him, "he looks you in the face"[13]. The more powerful tribes compete for power and are often hostile to each other. Members of the tribe owe their loyalty first to their tribal elders and then to any one else. The concept of a nation-state where authority stems from a central government is alien to them. Deeply religious and mostly illiterate they are greatly influenced by their *Pirs* (saints) and *Mullahs* (religious heads).

The Pushtuns, who mostly live in the eastern and southern area of Afghanistan, number about 6.5 million[14] and constitute 43 percent of the population. They are Hanafi Sunnis except for the Turis who are Shias. The Pushtuns have dominated over the rest of the Afghans ever since Ahmad Shah Abdali - a Durrani Pushtun - formed a confederation of Afghan tribes in 1747. The Durranis ruled over the country for over two hundred years occupying all the important positions in the civil and military establishment. This has been resented by the ethnic minorities in Afghanistan. In matters of day to day life and in their relations with others, the Pushtuns strictly follow their own tribal traditions and customs the most well known being the *Pushtunwali*[15]. This unwritten social code includes '*melmastia*' (hospitality) where even an enemy is to be treated as a honoured guest in a tribal home; '*Badal*' (revenge) makes it obligatory for a Pushtun to take his revenge for any murder in or insult to his clan or family member; '*nainawati*' (forgiveness) is to be followed if the enemy seeks pardon and is willing to pay the '*kisas*' (blood money) and the '*jirga*' (an assembly of notables where each one is free to express his opinion but is bound by tradition to accept the decision of the tribal elder). These are characteristics which set them apart from the rest.

A story is told about a tribal chief who had given shelter to another Pushtun in his '*hujra*' (courtyard) for the night. On being told by his son that the person who is being treated like a guest is the one who had murdered his brother and that he intended to take his revenge, the old man replied "not while he is our guest". But the son, who could not control his spirit for '*badal*', sneaked into the courtyard at night and killed the murderer of his brother.

When the tribal elder came to know of this filial disobedience and contravention of the *Pushtunwali* code of *melmastia* he called for his son and shot him dead for letting down the honour of his tribe. The fact that he lost another son in the process did not disturb him one bit. Such is the uncompromising social environment in which the Pushtun lives in the isolated villages of Afghanistan.

Caroe has described the features and characteristics of the various Afghan tribes in his book 'The Pathans'. What stands out most vividly is the animosities which exist between the various Pushtun tribes. The Durranis and Gilzais, both southwestern Afghans who share a common Persian culture have been political rivals for ages. The Yosufzais in eastern Afghanistan despised the Durranis almost as much as they hated the Sikhs'[16]. The Pushtun is no doubt brave, hardy and courageous but his characteristics of revenge and obstinacy, which Monstuart Elphnistone, British envoy to the Kingdom of Kabul, pointed out, as early as in the nineteenth century, are evident even today and are the main hurdles in creating a sense of unity amongst the Afghan leaders in exile.

The largest ethnic minority are the Tajiks who account for about 24.7 percent of the population. The 3.5 million Tajiks claim Iranian descent. They are mostly Hanafi Sunnis. Some are Ismaili Shias[17]. They speak Dari, a variation of Persian, and are mainly concentrated in the north and northeastern provinces. They have a great deal of ethno-linguistic affinity with the inhabitants of the Russian Republic of Tajikistan just across the border. The Tajiks are equally divided between the Soviet Union and Afghanistan. Most of them are agriculturists or petty traders leading a settled life unlike the Pushtuns who are mostly nomadic in character.

Afghan rulers (themselves Durrani Pushtuns) carried out some social engineering by settling their own ethnic groups in the fertile plains in the north forcing the Tajiks to move higher up in the hills. The aggressive nature of the Pushtuns and the patronage they received from Durrani kings caused a great deal of resentment amongst the Tajiks against the Pushtuns. They occupied subordinate positions and had little or no voice in the government. To them Durranis were their real enemies.

The Uzbeks were mostly driven into Afghanistan from Uzbekistan in Central Asia when the Soviets pushed their

communist ideology southwards. There are about one million Uzbeks in Afghanistan[18]. They have not played any significant role in the Afghan polity.

About 870,000 Hazaras[19] live in the inhospitable Hazarajat area in central Afghanistan. Their mongoloid features confirm their descent from the hordes of Chengiz Khan who swept the land astride the Hindu Kush in the 13th century. Most of them are Imami Shias and gain strength from the moral support they receive from the Iranians. Some are Ismailis and a few of them are Sunnis[20]. They are relatively poor and are mostly engaged in menial jobs. In earlier times they were taken as slaves by the Pushtuns and even today they are "at the bottom of the social pile"[21].

The other Afghan tribes are the Aimaks (800,000) who are Hanafi Sunnis living close to the Iranian border. They speak a dialect of Dari. Also along the Iran-Afghan border are found Farsiwan (600,000). They belong to the Ismaili faction of the Shia sect. The Brohi (200,000) are Hanafi Sunnis inhabiting the desert area of southwestern Afghanistan. The Turkomen (125,000) are found in the northwest. The Baluchis (100,000) are also Sunnis. They are a nomadic people moving between Siestan and Herat. The Nuristanis (100,000) are Sunnis who are living in the mountainous, terrain in the northeast opposite the 'kafir' valleys of Chitral in Pakistan[22].

About 6,000 sheep rearing Kirghiz[23], whose main occupation is carpet weaving from the wool obtained from their Karakul sheep, inhabit the strategic Wakhan corridor. They are nomads who used to move their special breed of sheep between China, Tajikstan and Gilgit in search of pasture or to escape from the very cold winters in the Pamir Knot. Now most of them are in refugee camps in the hot plains of Peshawar completely out of place. Some went over to eastern Turkey where they are feeling a little more at home. There are about 30,000 non-Muslims in Afghanistan mostly Hindus and Sikhs. A few thousand Jews also live in Kabul and other cities.

About 20 different languages are spoken in Afghanistan the two official ones being Pushtu, and Dari (modified Persian).

TABLE 1

Population of Ethnic Tribes in Afghanistan (1973).

Tribes	Population	% of Total Population
Pushtuns	6.5 million.	43 percent
Tajiks	3.5 million.	24 percent
Uzbeks	1.0 million.	6 percent
Hazaras	870 thousand.	5 percent
Aimaqs	800 thousand.	5 percent
Farsiwans	600 thousand.	4 percent
Brahiu	200 thousand.	1.3 percent
Turkomen	125 thousand.	.7 percent
Nuristani	100 thousand.	.6 percent
Baluch	100 thousand.	.6 percent
Moghuls	Several thousand.	-
Kirghiz	Several thousand.	-
Hindus	20 thousand.	.1 percent
Sikhs	10 thousand.	.05 percent
Jews	Several thousand.	-
Others	-	-

Source

Dupree, L. Afghanistan, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey 1973, pp. 59-64.

Historical Perspective

The land astride the Hindu Kush, known as Aryana in the ancient scriptures of the Avesta and the Rig-Veda has witnessed the ebb and flow of history from times immemorial. Waves of conquerors, adventurers, religious reformers and empire builders have left behind sediments which form the ethnic mosaic of Afghanistan today. Some incorporated this territory in their expanding empires; a few merely looted and plundered its cities and went their way; yet others tarried for a while and went on to establish kingdoms in greener pastures beyond. While others are remembered by the sculpture and monuments it is only Islam that has left indelible marks on the culture and tradition of the Afghans.

What was once a 'roundabout' for the spread of civilisations became a graveyard for the ancient faiths and beliefs. Parsees do not live any more in this birth place of the Prophet Zoroaster. Yellow-robed Buddhist monks no longer make their rounds as the early morning rays of the sun strike the Hindu Kush. Many Hindu temples lie in ruins. These earlier civilisations have been thrown into the dust bin of history. Alexander's cities in Balkh disappeared under tons of earth. Sculptured idols of Hindu gods and goddesses in Kabul are only recently being excavated. The largest ever statue of Buddha, no doubt, still stands amidst the rocks in Bamyan but is headless and armless[24]. His followers are not there to restore it to its original form. Even the world famous Gandhara civilisation has been obiliterated and all that remains are rock carvings, picture postcards and museum pieces. Nothing is left of the great Sassanid empire of which the country of the Hindu Kush was a satrapy. Except for the physical features of some of the Afghan tribes all links with the descendants of the great Macedonians or the Buddhist and Indian rulers that followed have been broken.

What remains today, however, is the Islamic faith, brought to this region by the Arabs in the 7th century AD. The first penetration of the Arabs into Qandahar took place in 699/700 AD when the governor of Siestan (Persia) was sent to punish the Hindu Shahi king of Kabul for not paying the annual tribute. Then came the Taimurid (821-873) with their capital at Nishapur (Persia) and the Samanids (819-1005) from Bokhara (Central Asia). It was, however, the Saffarid (867-1495) who finally

defeated the Hindu kingdom at Kabul[25]. It is the cultural influence of the Turks, the Persians and the Moghuls, who ruled over this land at various periods of its recent history, which is quite visible amongst the present day Afghans. Many in Iran still regard western Afghanistan as a greater part of Khorasan[26].

The town of Ghazni was a part of the Persian Empire and was governed for them by the Turkish Mamlukes. It was a Turkish slave by the name of Subaktagin, who overthrew his master in 977[27] and founded the Ghazni Dynasty. His son, the famous Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni (the idol breaker), established the Ghaznavid Empire. It was his iconoclastic zeal which set the pace for the rise of Islam in this subsystem. By the time of his death in 1030 he had become the ruler of the entire country on either side of the Hindu Kush. His domain extended beyond the Oxus in the north and upto the Punjab in the south. Ghazni, during the reign of Mahmud, had also become a great seat of learning, art and culture testifying to the refine qualities which Mahmud possessed in addition to his military capabilities.

The beauty and grandeur of Ghazni, however, did not last long. Alauddin Ghori, from the town of Ghor in the western Hindu Kush ransacked Ghazni in 1150 and set an example of Afghan savagery when he forced the captives from Ghazni to carry lumps of earth on their backs and marched them to his native city where he had them butchered. Their blood was mixed with the soil they brought with them. The mortar thus produced was used to erect victory towers[28]. Not much of the savagery of the Afghans has been lost inspite of the eight centuries that have elapsed since then. The Ghoris were later displaced by the Turkish ruler Khwarizm Shah who extended his rule over most of the territory astride the Hindu Kush, in the beginning of the thirteenth century.

Ghazni was again sacked in 1221. This time by another scourge of history, the infamous Chengiz Khan. He ransacked the city, massacred the citizens, destroyed the crops and burnt their dwellings. (This was to take revenge for the killing of his grandson by the local inhabitants during the siege of a fortress called *Shahar-i-Zohak*)[29]. The only legacy he and his soldiers could leave behind was the features of the Hazara tribes which inhabit central Afghanistan today.

The land of the Afghans saw some peace in the 14th century when Taimur came down from Samarkand in Central Asia, and occupied Herat in 1379 which he made as his capital. His descendant Zaheeruddin Babar subjugated Kabul and Ghazni in 1504. He tarried for 21 years in the city which he loved most before moving on to establish the magnificent Moghul Empire of India, which included much of what is Afghanistan today. His heart was, however, in Kabul which he chose as his last resting place.

In the 16th and 17th century present day Afghanistan was divided between the Moghul and Persian Empires. With the cities often changing hands, Akbar captured Qandahar in 1594 and lost it. Humayun again occupied the city in 1638 but was retaken by the Persians ten years later. The Moghuls never captured it again[30]. After the death of Aurangzeb, the last of the Great Moghuls in 1707, Nadir Shah of Persia occupied the Afghan principalities. He took Qandahar in 1737 with the help of Afghan (Abadali) mercenaries. He went on to capture Delhi and brought back with him the treasures of the great Moghuls including the world famous *Koh-i-Noor* (mountain of light) diamond.

When Nadir Shah of Persia was assassinated in 1747, Ahmad Shah Abadali, a 23 year old Durrani - Pushtun, was serving under him as the head of a 4,000 - strong Afghan contingent in Meshed (Persia). On learning of Nadir Shah's death Ahmad Shah fought his way back from Meshed to Qandahar, where he was proclaimed as the Shah. It is he who founded the Kingdom of Afghanistan, in 1747 with its capital at Qandahar. Afghanistan then, was merely a confederation of tribes and Khanates with the central authority confined to the cities only.

Kabul was still under the control of the Moghuls. Ahmad Shah Durrani, as he was later called, captured Kabul, wrested Badakshan from the Amir of Bokhara, invaded India nine times and at the time of his death, in 1773, his empire included Kashmir, Punjab, Sindh and Baluchisatan, While he and the Amir of Bukhara agreed on the Amu Darya as the border between the domains of the Amir and the newly established Kingdom of Afghanistan, the eastern, southern and western boundaries remained a subject of conflict between emerging powers in the region till they were finally settled in the late nineteenth century.

After the death of Ahmad Shah his Empire began to fall apart. Punjab was lost to the Afghans in 1798. The Sikhs captured the Attock Fort on the river Indus in 1813, Kashmir six years later and by 1823 they had occupied Peshawar, the winter capital of Ahmad Shah Durrani's short lived Afghan Kingdom.

The Afghans had not only lost their conquered territories but had also split into virtually independent city states. Shah Shuja was the ruler of Qandahar, Ayub, son of Taimur Shah, sat on the 'throne' at Kabul and Dost Mohammad controlled Ghazni. It was in this period of the break up of the Durrani Kingdom that the British and the Russians began their 'Great Game' of incorporating Afghanistan in their respective spheres of influence.

The British had signed a defence alliance with Shah Shuja in 1809 (whose authority then was confined to Qandahar only) in an attempt to keep the Russians out. In 1826, however, Dost Mohammad captured Kabul and declared himself as the Amir. He defeated Shah Shuja in 1834 and overran Qandahar forcing Shah Shuja to flee to India. Although Shah Shuja and been ousted by Dost Mohammad, the British and the Sikhs signed a tripartite agreement with him accepting him as the lawful ruler of Kabul. They broke off relations with Dost Mohammad as he was proving too independent.

In 1837 the Persians laid siege to Herat acting as proxies of Russia who provided them with arms, troops and money. The siege could not last long as the Afghans were given support by the East India Company which enabled them to force the Persians to lift the siege and withdraw to their own territory. However, this made the British aware of the intentions of the Tsars. To meet a perceived threat to India from the Russians the British moved their troops into Afghanistan. They took Qandahar, Ghazni and Kabul, forced Dost Mohammad to go into exile and placed the more pliable Shah Shuja on the throne. This first Anglo-Afghan War (1838-1842), however, proved a disaster for the British as they were forced to retreat in 1842. Out of the 4,500 men (650 Europeans) and 15,000 followers only Dr. William Brydon survived the onslaught of the Afghan tribesmen and reached Jalalabad, exhausted and tired[31] to rejoin his fellow countrymen in that garrison town.

Dost Mohammad returned to Kabul once again as the Amir of

Afghanistan with the borders not yet defined. After 1849 Dost Mohammad turned to the conquest of the non-Pushtun people living north of the Hindu Kush (Uzbeks, Turkomen and Tajiks) with the support of the British who, a few years earlier, had dethroned him.

After his death in 1863, his son, Sher Ali ascended the throne. His hobnobbing with the Soviets and his invitation to the emissaries of the Tsar again raised the spectre of a Russian invasion of India through Afghanistan, particularly so when Sher Ali refused to allow a similar British mission to enter Afghanistan in July, 1878. To pre-empt this move the British invaded Afghanistan again and forced Sher Ali to take refuge in Russia. This second Anglo-Afghan War (1878) resulted in the British occupying Qandahar and Kabul. Quetta had already been occupied by the British in 1876. Kurram, Khyber and Michni were now also lost to the Afghans for good. The Treaty of Gandamak was signed between Britain and Afghanistan in 1879 by which the British agreed to defend Afghanistan against any threat from the northern and western border but the Viceroy of India would control Afghanistan's foreign affairs. By this Treaty the Amir also ceded Pishin and Sibi to the British.

The British placed Amir Abdur Rahman on the throne of Kabul in 1880 giving him an annual subsidy of Rupees twelve lacs. Abdur Rahman proved to be the greatest of all Afghan rulers. He concentrated his efforts on consolidating his authority over the Afghan tribes and making them 'subservient' to a central authority and left external relations to the British. He was ruthless and repressive and combined guile, bribery and pressure to keep the Afghan tribes in check. He eliminated the elders who opposed him, confiscated their weapons and levelled their fortifications, at the same time rewarding those who supported him. He alone understood the characteristics of his people who could be subdued by strong measures only provided these did not touch upon their traditions and beliefs.

He made a deliberate effort to change the demographic character of northern Afghanistan where the tribes had closer affinity with their northern cousins in the Russian Muslim Republics than with the Pushtuns south of the Hindu Kush. Large number of Pushtuns were sent to permanently settle in those areas. This measure suited the British as it helped in

keeping the Russian influence away by virtue of the fact that the areas close to the Russian border no longer remained a preserve of those tribes which were ethnically linked to Soviet Central Asian Republics. This did not prevent the Russians from occupying Panjdeh an island in the Oxus River in northern Afghanistan in 1885. The British, however, put pressure on the Russians and prevented them from advancing any further southwards.

Amir Abdur Rahman, who had lived 12 years in exile in Russia, never trusted the Russians and was always fearful of their intentions to move into Afghanistan. On the contrary his relations with the British were good. He not only accepted the Durand Line as the frontier between his kingdom and that of British India (The Durand Line was later ratified by Amir Habibullah in 1905 and king Amanullah in 1919) but also renounced his claims over the territories east of the Durand Line[32]. The British consequently raised Amir Abdur Rahman's subsidy from Rupees twelve lacs annually to eighteen lacs. The general impression that the Durand Line was drawn arbitrarily with no regard to ethnic tribes living astride it has been disproved by Sir Olaf Caroe. According to him those Pushtun tribes who habitually traded with Kohat and Peshawar were placed east of the Durand Line in keeping with their traditional links.

On the death of Amir Abdur Rahman in 1901, his eldest son Amir Habibullah ascended the throne of Kabul. He was favourable to the British and allowed them to continue handling the foreign relations of his country. At the Anglo-Russian Convention at St Petersburg in 1907, the Tsar agreed that Afghanistan was outside the sphere of influence of Russia[33]. However it was about this time that the so-called 'Young Afghan' movement developed which, influenced by the Russian Revolution, made total national independence and the execution of reforms in Afghanistan as their goal. In 1919 Habibullah was assassinated presumably because he gave the impression of being too aligned with British policies.

His third son Sardar Amanullah replaced him as the new king of Afghanistan. Amanullah was a dynamic and ambitious ruler. He was impressed by the October Revolution in Russia and encouraged the national liberation movement of the 'Young Afghans'. The First World War had ended with Afghanistan remaining neutral. However Amanullah was not happy with the

British who were carving the Muslim Ottoman Empire and distributing it to their allies. Amanullah wanted to get rid of British control over the foreign relations of Afghanistan. He declared a *Jehad* against the British and ordered General Nadir Khan, the commander-in-chief of the Afghan army, to march towards Thal a border town in the Tribal Areas of the Northwest Frontier Province. This resulted in the third Anglo-Afghan War, (May, 1919) which came to an end within a month when cease-fire was announced on 3 June. The result of this short lived engagement with the might of the British, however, resulted in a political victory for the Afghans. The Treaty of Rawalpindi was signed in 1919 by which Britain recognised the complete independence of Afghanistan and gave up their attempts to control the foreign policy of that country. In return King Amanullah accepted the Durand Line as the permanent border between Afghanistan and British India. Article V of the Treaty of Rawalpindi stated "The Afghan Government accepts the Indo-Afghan frontier accepted by the late Amir"[34] (Amir Habibullah). Thus laying to rest once again the contention of the Afghan rulers that the Durand Line had never been accepted by them as the international frontier between Afghanistan and British India.

Two years later Amanullah signed a Treaty of Friendship with the Soviet Union. According to this Treaty USSR was to give one million gold Roubles annually to Afghanistan alongwith several aircraft and 5,000 rifles. The Russians were also to set up an aviation school and a gun powder plant in Afghanistan[35]. He also signed treaties with Persia, Egypt, Turkey, Italy, Germany and France - making full use of his newly acquired control over external relations.

On the domestic scene his impact was even more. His radical reforms included introduction of western dress, abolition of the veil, modification of marriage laws, compulsory education, restrictions on religious activities, secular courts, prohibition of '*beegar*' (forced labour) and the promulgation of the first constitution for Afghanistan, Amanullah toured Europe and Turkey (1927-1928) along with his wife Queen Soraya and was greatly impressed by the changes introduced by Mustafa Kamal. He, however, neither had the stature of Ataturk nor the support of the majority of his people. They were angered at seeing their Queen in western dress moving about in public in Europe without

a veil. The relations between the centre and the tribes had also not been improved. There was, therefore, considerable opposition to the changes he tried to introduce in the deeply rooted Islamic values and tribal traditions of his country. His reforms, therefore, failed. Raskolonikov, Ambassador of the Soviet Union in Kabul in 1929, giving his assessment of Amanullah's reforms stated "The tragedy of Amanullah's case lay in the fact that he undertook bourgeois reforms without the existence of any national bourgeoisie in the country[36]". His successors in 1978 made the same mistake.

Amanullah, inspite of his good intentions, became so unpopular that even a nondescript Afghan by the name of Habibullah Kalaqani and by profession a Bacha Saqa (water carrier) led a small army into Kabul and replaced Amanullah who went into exile in Italy. Bacha Saqa was an illiterate Tajik upstart, as such he had no chances of succeeding against the elite and well entrenched Durrani Pushtuns. He could only sit on the throne for 10 months. On 17 October, 1929 General Mohammad Nadir Khan came back from Paris, where he was his country's ambassador. With the help of his brothers and the tacit support of the British he seized Kabul and proclaimed himself as the new king. Bacha Saqa was caught and executed. Immediately after ascending the throne Nadir Shah cancelled all the radical reforms which Amanullah had tried to introduce. He also tried to reduce Soviet presence in Afghanistan although he reaffirmed the Soviet Afghan Treaty concluded at Kabul, on November 22, 1921.

The Soviets, ever ready, to increase their influence in Afghanistan had tried to re-instate Amanullah. Ghulam Nabi Charkhi, Afghanistan's Ambassador in Moscow, who was still loyal to Amanullah, agreed to lead a Soviet supported force against Bacha Saqa. The force made some headway but came up against stiff resistance. When news of Amanullah having left the country was received the Soviets lost interest in Ghulam Nabi Charkhi and withdrew their assistance to him. Charkhi was later executed by Nadir Shah. In the meantime the new ruler had consolidated his position and in 1931 renewed the Soviet - Afghan Friendship and Non-Aggression Treaty. Two years later Nadir Shah was assassinated by the son of Ghulam Nabi Charkhi, at a prize giving ceremony, as an act of filial revenge.

Mohammad Zahir Shah was only 19 years old when he

ascended the throne in 1933 after his father's death. Even after getting older he remained a country squire - a gentleman but weak and indifferent. The reigns of government were taken over by his uncles Hashem Khan, Shah Wali and Shah Mahmud who followed harsh and repressive policies. Zahir Shah and his uncles kept his country out of the Second World War by declaring Afghanistan's neutrality just as his predecessors had done in World War I. He tried to maintain good relations with all major powers. A trade agreement with the Soviet Union in 1940, a Treaty of Friendship with China in 1944 and a request for US loan in 1946 indicate his attempts to keep all options open.

By 1946 it became clear that the British would soon be granting independence to India and that the country was likely to be partitioned. Zahir Shah saw in this development an opportunity to enlarge his kingdom and if possible obtain an access to the sea. In June, 1947, when a referendum was to be held in the North West Frontier Province of Pakistan (where a Congress Ministry was in power) on the question of whether the people of NWFP wished to join Pakistan or India, Afghanistan sent a note to British and Indian governments stating that Afghans living between British India and the Indo-Afghan border must be given an opportunity to decide whether to join Afghanistan, Pakistan or India or to remain independent[37].

Such a proposal coming from Afghanistan was quite preposterous as at no time during the negotiations on the partition of India did the question arise of any province asking for independence. Infact there was no need of a referendum in the NWFP as the Partition plan envisaged all contiguous Muslim majority areas to form the state of Pakistan. Since, however, NWFP was the only Muslim majority province which had a congress Ministry it was felt that the people of the Frontier Province should be given a choice to join Pakistan or India.

Abdus Samad Ghaus, the Deputy Foreign Minister of his country in the Daud regime, argues in his book, 'The Fall of Afghanistan', that the Tribal Areas should have been treated like a princely state and the law of paramountcy should have been applied to the Tribal Areas as in the case of the princely states of India. His argument is extremely shallow as there is no comparison between the two. The princely states had a different status altogether in British India. They had a 'head of state', their

own emblem, flag, stamps, army, judicial system and were even entitled to royal salutes. The Tribal Areas enjoyed none of these privileges. True that they had their own socio-ethnic culture but they remained very much part of British India and hence part of one or the other succeeding state.

In any case none of the princely States of India remained independent, they became part of India or Pakistan. It will not be incorrect to assume that the Red Shirt Leader, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, who was opposed to the creation of Pakistan, and the Indians, who wanted to make Pakistan a non-viable state, must have encouraged Afghanistan to put forward such illogical suggestions.

Afghanistan got the dubious distinction of casting the only negative vote on Pakistan's entry into the United Nations in September, 1947. Abdul Hussein Khan Aziz, Afghanistan's representative at the UN while speaking on this occasion said "we are unable to vote for Pakistan because we cannot recognise NWFP as a part of Pakistan so long as the people of the Frontier have not been given an opportunity to determine for themselves whether they wanted to become independent or to become part of Pakistan[38]". However, after one month, Afghanistan withdrew its negative vote.

In July, 1947 a referendum was held in the NWFP, on the question of accession to either of the two emerging states. Over 50 percent of the voters turned out inspite of the boycott of the referendum by the Red Shirts. The result of the referendum was 289,244 votes in favour of Pakistan while only 2,074 voted for a union with India[39]. Ghaus's comment that there was a very low turn out in the election displays his emotional approach to the so-called Pushtunistan cause. Such a percentage is considered high even in developed societies. (only 10 percent participated in the Afghan election held in 1969). After the creation of Pakistan a series of *jirgas* were held in the Tribal Agencies in November, 1947. The tribal elders opted for attachment of the Tribal Agencies to Pakistan.

Afghanistan increased its political pressure on Pakistan by starting a propaganda campaign in support of what they termed as an independent state of Pushtunistan comprising lands where the Pushtuns were in a majority. Strangely enough the Pushtuns

living on their side of the frontier were not to be given a chance of exercising their right to become part of an 'independent Pushtunistan'. A Loya *Jirga* (a grand assembly of tribal elders) met on 26 July, 1949 and repudiated old frontier agreements, which had been made with British India and accepted by three different Afghan rulers. Pakistan retaliated by halting movement of goods from Karachi to Afghanistan. This raised tensions between the two neighbouring Muslim States still further. In October, 1951, Liaquat Ali Khan, the Prime Minister of Pakistan, was assassinated by Said Akber, an Afghan living in exile in Pakistan, causing further tensions between the two countries.

Although the ruling hierarchy in Afghanistan wanted to derive some advantage at Pakistan's expense they did not foreclose their option of seeking assistance from USA, a country which had friendly relations with Pakistan. It was only when USA rejected Afghanistan's request for arms aid, made repeatedly in 1948, 1951 and 1954, that they turned finally to the Soviet Union for the modernisation of their armed forces. It may be recalled that it was Moscow which had first provided military hardware to Afghanistan in 1921 and later signed numerous treaties of Friendship and Cooperation with that country.

Immediately after World War II, Washington's interest in Southwest Asia was minimal. It was only when relations between USA and USSR became bitter and the threat of communism to Asian countries increased in the early 50s that the United States began working towards a collective shield against the Red Tide. While Pakistan, Iran and Turkey, all lying on the periphery of the Soviet Union, agreed to join the Baghdad Pact (later to become CENTO) Afghanistan, which had traditionally remained neutral, did not do so. USA, therefore, gave no heed to Afghanistan's request and infact came to the wrong conclusion that Afghanistan was not strategically important to them and that a strong Pakistan and Iran could serve their national interests in the Gulf region.

Pakistan joined the US sponsored anti-communist Baghdad Pact to help it to improve its defensive capabilities against its real enemy India. The new Prime Minister of Afghanistan, Sardar Mohammad Daud, a cousin and brother-in-law of King Zahir Shah, described the military aid by USA to Pakistan as "a grave danger to the security and peace to Afghanistan[40]. He should have

been aware that Pakistan had made no claims on Afghanistan and had no intention whatsoever of seizing even an inch of Afghan territory. What upset him was that the stronger Pakistan became militarily the less chances there would be to use force against it to achieve his dream of Pushtunistan. The size of which kept increasing from 'Pushtun lands' initially to the whole of NWFP and Baluchistan later making the whole issue a farce which no country took seriously except for USSR and India which did so to suit their own designs in the subcontinent.

Immediately after Pakistan joined the Baghdad Pact Afghanistan stepped up its propaganda against Pakistan. A *Loya Jirga* was held in December, 1955 which gave the approval for a demand for a plebiscite for the Pushtuns living across the Durand Line and for making alternative arrangements for obtaining weapons since USA had refused to supply them. Daud also warned Pakistan of grave consequences if it incorporated the NWFP into the newly created One Unit in West Pakistan and when it did so the Pakistan Embassy in Kabul was attacked and four Pakistani officials were killed. The Afghan army was mobilised. In retaliation to this anti-Pakistan drive by Daud, the Pakistan government broke off diplomatic relations with Kabul.

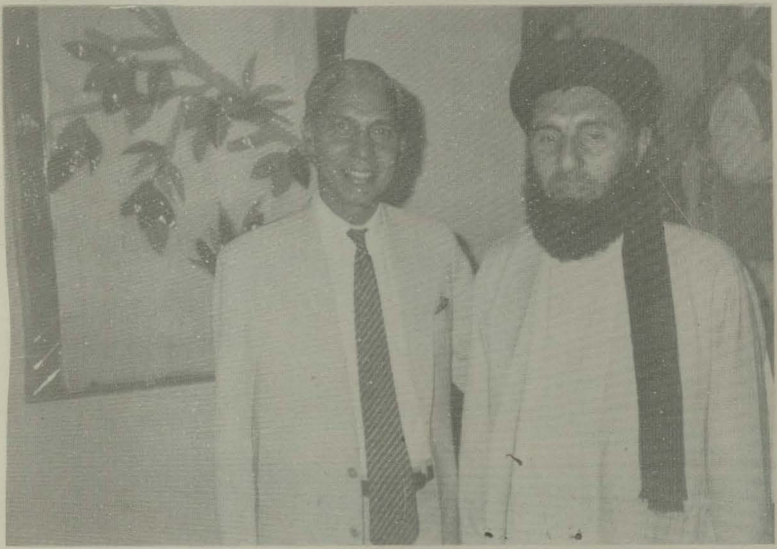
To give moral and material support to the Afghan leaders, Nikita S. Krushchev, First Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party and Prime Minister Nikolai A. Bulganin visited Kabul from 15 to 19 December, 1955. They pledged $100 million for economic development, renewed the 1931 Afghan - Soviet Non Aggression Treaty, opened up negotiations for Soviet military aid and backed the Pushtunistan demand for the first time[41]. A year later the arms agreement was signed. It is worth noting that the Soviet Union was earlier not supporting Afghanistan on the Pushtunistan issue. It was only after Pakistan joined the Baghdad Pact that Moscow began referring to this irredentist claim as well. The Soviets were initially critical of the Afghan rulers for raising the 'Pushtunistan' demand. They are reported to have said "The Afghan government, while denying the right of national self determination to the non-Afghan people within Afghanistan itself, supports the movement for self-determination of the Afghans in the Indian subcontinent with the separation of their lands from Pakistan into an independent one of Pushtunistan[42]". This comment by the Russians clearly indicates the hollowness of the

Pushtunistan demand and also shows that USSR did not perceive this as a lawful claim. The fact that it did so later was only because its relations with Pakistan soured due to the latter signing the anti-Soviet military pact.

While a military alliance with USA helped Pakistan in strengthening its armed forces and in balancing the budget to some extent it embittered relations with Afghanistan further. Relations between the two Muslim neighbours were prevented from getting worse by the visits of President Sikandar Mirza of Pakistan to Kabul in 1956 and a return visit by King Zahir Shah to Karachi in 1958. USA, though belatedly, offered economic assistance to Afghanistan. It promised to build the Spin Boldak - Qandahar - Kabul Highway, construct several airports and was willing to participate in the Helmand Valley Irrigation Project in southern Afghanistan.

Daud was a nationalist but with extra territorial ambitions. He wanted to make his country strong economically and militarily so as to be in a position to put pressure on Pakistan on the Pushtunistan issue. He was clever enough to get assistance from both the superpowers without fully aligning himself with either. But he did not have the wisdom to realise that there is no such thing as a free lunch. All assistance, more so military aid, is accompanied by experts, technocrats, advisers and specialists. Soon the donors begin to have a say both in the internal and external affairs of the recipient country. Daud pushed his country into the Soviet lap to achieve his aims but got entangled in the web. A Russian soldier working in Kabul in 1956 is believed to have remarked "the growing communication facilities financed by the Soviets will be useful to our armies when they will march southwards[43]".

In 1961, Afghanistan protested, and rightly so, against the overflights of the American U-2 spy plane which used the Badaber Base, near Peshawar in Pakistan, for carrying out reconnaissance flights over the Soviet Union. Field Marshal Mohammad Ayub Khan, instead of dealing with the issue in a manner which would not embitter the relations with Afghanistan further decided to put pressure on Daud for interfering in Pakistan's internal affairs. Once again diplomatic relations were broken off, the border was closed to shipment of goods to land-locked Afghanistan. The entry of Afghan nomads, which was a regular feature in winter, into



Author with Engineer Gulbadin Hikmatyar
Chief of the Hizb-e-Islami



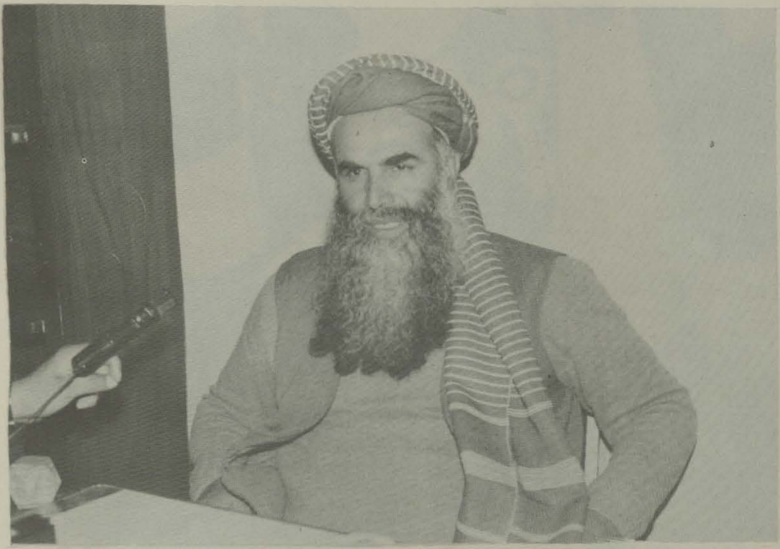
Author with Professor Burhanuddin Rabbani
Chief of the Jamiat-e-Islami Afghanistan and
Dr. Ijaz Shafi Gilani
Head of the Asia Study Centre, Islamabad



Author with Professor Sibghatullah Mojeddedi
President of the Afghan Interim Government



Author with Pir Syed Ahmad Gailani
Chief of the National Islamic Front of Afghanistan



Professor Abdur Rab Rasul Sayyaf
Prime Minister of the Afghan Interim Government



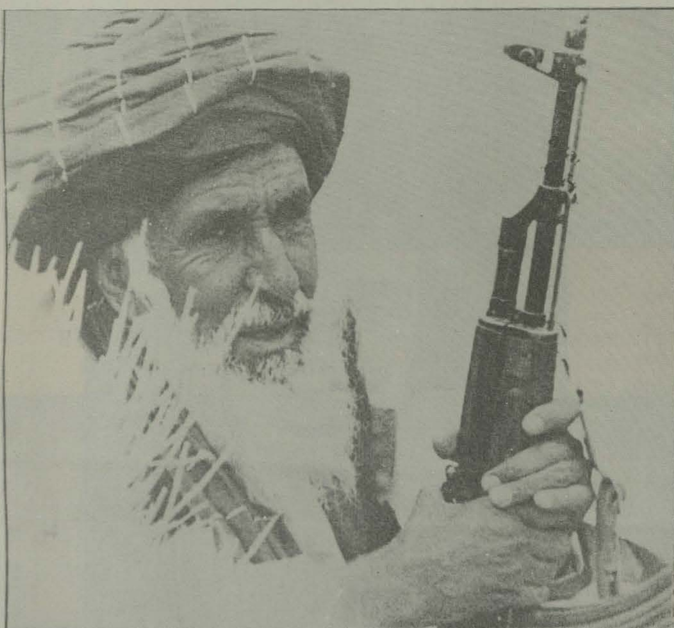
Maulvi Mohammad Yunus Khalis
Chief of the Hizb-e-Islami (Khalis Group)



Maulvi Nabi Mohammedi
Chief of the Harakat-e-Inqilabi
Minister for Defence of the Afghan Interim Government



A Mujahideen Group
heading for Northern Afghanistan
Photograph, Courtesy: Asia Study Centre, Islamabad.



Haji Latif Nifa
Mujahideen Commander of Qandahar



Ahmad Shah Masud
Lion of Panjsher



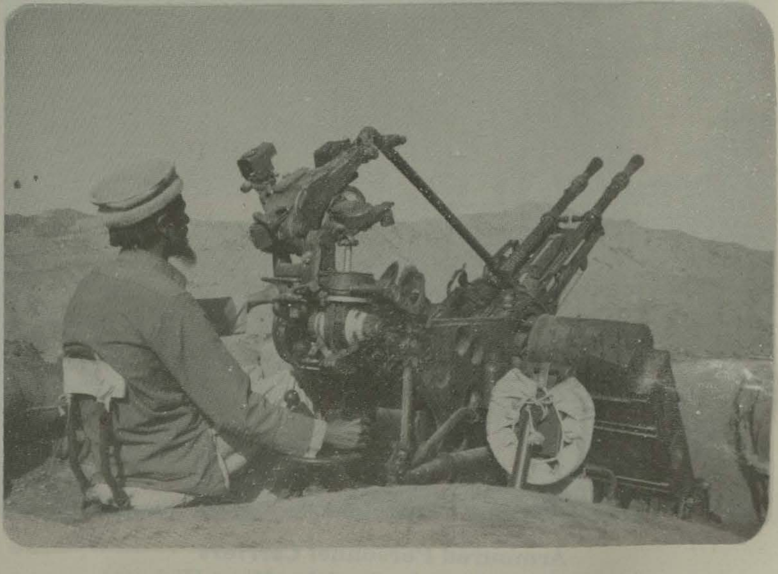
Mujahideen Inspecting
a shot down Soviet-built helicopter
Photograph, Courtesy: Asia Study Centre, Islamabad.



Armoured Personnel Carriers
knocked down along the Qandahar-Herat Highway
Photograph, Courtesy: Asia Study Centre, Islamabad.



A Mujahid
preparing to fire a rocket propelled grenade RPG-7
Photograph, Courtesy: Asia Study Centre, Islamabad.



A Twin-Barrel Anti-Aircraft Zikuyag Gun
Photograph, Courtesy: Asia Study Centre, Islamabad.

Pakistan was blocked. The result of strong arm tactics by Pakistan proved counter productive. Pakistan's punitive measures created serious problems for Afghanistan whose northern neighbour then came to its rescue. Moscow provided $212 million in credit to furnish Afghanistan's 2nd Five Year Plan[44]. This move by the Russians made USA apply pressure on Pakistan to open its border with Afghanistan which it did. The superpower game of using proxies to serve their own interest in this region had been evident since the commencement of the Cold War and continued till their interests in Afghanistan waned.

Having allowed transit trade to recommence Ayub also tried to win over Afghanistan by suggesting a confederation between Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan - a proposal which he made in 1962 but no progress was made towards achieving such a strategic consensus.

Daud was a dynamic figure. With his forceful personality he had pushed King Zahir Shah and other ministers in the background. His tough external policies, however, were causing tension along the Pak-Afghan border. On the domestic scene he was becoming unpopular by taking steps which were not acceptable to his people. On his pursuasion Queen Humaira and other ladies of the royal court threw off their veils in a public ceremony which soon led to the appearance of unveiled women in public. This deliberate flouting of Afghan traditions and Islamic customs shocked and angered the religious leaders and their illiterate followers who blamed Daud for such radical social reforms. His other policies also met with disfavour. Conscription for the army was disliked, extension of central authority to areas controlled by tribal maliks was objected to. Ties with the Soviet Union were causing resentment even among members of the royal family.

In 1963, therefore, after 10 years as Prime Minister, Daud was eased out by the king because his hard line attitude towards Pakistan on the Pushtunistan issue and his modernisation programme was causing more problems then those which he was solving. Opposition was growing and clandestine political parties began to take shape. Both traditionalists (religious oriented) and the communists grew in strength. The new Prime Minister Dr. Mohammad Yusuf, the first commoner to reach that position, was mild and soft and adopted conciliatory policies. Afghanistan and

Pakistan again resumed diplomatic relations as tension between the countries eased.

On 11 May, 1965 a new electoral law providing for universal direct vote by secret ballot for all Afghan men and women over 20 years went into effect[45]. (It is an irony that a quarter of a century later the Afghan *Mujahideen* leaders cannot come up with an agreed procedure for holding of elections, when an electoral law, promulgated 25 years earlier, had been followed in the two elections held in Afghanistan during Zahir Shah's rule).

General elections for the 216 member *Wolesi Jirga* (House of the People) and the 84 member *Mashroni Jirga* (House of Elders) were held on a non-party basis from 26 August to 28 September, 1965. Three general groupings arose as a result of the elections: the monarchists, the democrats and the leftists. During the period from 1963 to 1966 demand for the separation of the royal family from politics; increase in individual and political freedom; creation of a free press and the formation of political parties were made. Under ground political parties were formed, the most significant of which was the Peoples Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA). Others were *Khudam-ul-Furqain*; *Jamaat-ul-Ulema-Mohammedi*; *Ikhwan-ul-Muslimeen*[46] and its militant wing *Jawanan-e-Muslimeen* (Muslim Youth). These right wing parties were formed to combat communism.

Inspite of Daud being replaced by a more moderate Prime Minister the claim of Pushtunistan remained. It is interesting to note that even though Afghanistan was on the best of terms with India, it 'condemned' India for bombing Peshawar during the Indo-Pakistan War of 1965 because according to them the Indian air force had attacked a city in Pushtunistan. "The Afghan Foreign Ministry expressed its 'grave concern' at the Indian bombing of Pushtunistan" said a press release.

Dr. Yusuf was too soft, weak and ineffective to be the Prime Minister of a turbulent Afghan state. He resigned on health grounds and was replaced by Mohammad Hashim Mianwandwal in 1965. During his tenure of three years relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan improved somewhat. Ayub stopped over in Kabul and Zahir Shah once again visited Pakistan. Washington also stepped up its support to Afghanistan in order not to leave the field open to the Soviet Union. President Lyndon

B. Johnson promised US assistance for the 3rd Five Year Plan, (the 2nd Five Year Plan, having been underwritten by the Soviets). He also made an offer in 1968 of a $4.6 million loan for the Helmand Valley Irrigation Project which, inspite of favourable feasibility studies by US experts, was found to be a white elephant[47]. Earlier International Cooperation Administration (ICA) later to be known as Agency for International Development (AID) had provided $15 million[48] for the construction of the Qandahar airport which too was an over ambitious programme. These offers of assistance from USA, however, did not prevent King Zahir Shah from visiting Moscow the same year. The art of playing one power against the other, which the Afghans had perfected over many years, was used to best advantage.

By 1970 the resentment against the infiltration of communist elements into the universities and into the media was growing. In April the pro-Marxist newspaper Parcham published a poem by Barq Shafie entitled '*Darud bar Lenin*[49]' (May Allah bless the soul of Lenin). The *Ulema* (religious leaders) were angry at this linkage between God and an atheist. They arranged large scale demonstration for 34 days (22 April to 25 May) against the weekly Parcham. This was the first open reaction against the spread of communist ideology in Afghanistan.

Daud Overthrows The Monarchy

In a surprise move, on 17 July, 1973 while King Zahir Shah and his wife, Queen Homaira, were outside the country, Prince Mohammad Daud, overthrew the monarchy. The bloodless coup, carried out with the support of the Parcham faction of the pro-Soviet PDPA, ended the 40 year rule of King Zahir Shah, who went into exile in Italy where he lives today. Daud's precipitous action was perhaps due to the fact that he felt that Zahir Shah was becoming too soft on Pushtunistan and was tilting towards the United States. The other political parties which cooperated with Daud in removing the king were the Afghan Socialist Democratic party, the *Shola-e-Javed*, (Eternal Flame) and the *Sitam-e-Milli* (Oppression against the nation). All these parties wanted an end to the monarchy and they were all leftist oriented.

As the general orientation of the coup was leftist the Soviet Union was the first state to recognise the Republic. The Shahanshah of Iran was naturally perturbed as a neighbouring

king had been overthrown. He could be, and was, the next in the region to be thrown out. China reacted unfavourably. India kept quiet because they believed Moscow wanted Zahir Shah to go. Selig Harrison, Senior Associate of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and a former correspondent of the Washington Post, called this merely a "feud within the ruling elite". Prime Minister Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto was quite concerned as Daud's anti-Pakistan attitude during his first Prime Ministership was still fresh in his mind.

On becoming the President of the new Afghan Republic Daud blamed the past regime for a total collapse of economic, social and administrative conditions. But he could not hide the fact that he had taken his country a step closer to the Soviet Union. At the time of Daud's coup there were 800 hard-core Soviet trained communist officers in the army[50]. The members of the Central Committee that he named were mostly communist-oriented. Daud used strong arm tactics to suppress all opposition. He confined the *Pirs* to their own areas, arrested 200 Ikhwan-ul-*Muslimeen* members. Engineer Gulbadin Hikmatyar and Professor Burhanuddin Rabbani, both active political leaders, escaped to Pakistan in 1974 to avoid being persecuted by Daud. Pakistan and Afghanistan were again at loggerheads. The insurgency in Baluchistan was encouraged by Daud and Bhutto used Hikmatyar and others to try and destabilise Daud's government. To give moral support to Daud, President Nikolai S. Podgorny of USSR visited Kabul in 1975 and extended the 1931 Non-Aggression Treaty by another 10 years. By now the Soviet support to Pushtunishtan had cooled as Leonard, I. Brezhnev, President of the USSR had been advocating the inviolability of frontiers in his Asian collective Security Plan launched in 1969.

Daud thought that he could keep the Soviet influence under check but by 1976 he realised that he had got himself too deeply involved with the Soviet technical and logistical support. His country's economy was linked to a large extent on the policies of Moscow towards Afghanistan. Large number of Russian advisers and experts had infiltrated into almost every ministry and leftist parties. Clandestinely supported by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) they had begun to raise their head. His relations with Moscow then began to cool. The Soviets did not like his suppression of the PDPA and indirectly warned him to work

through this political party to implement the reforms. Daud not only disregarded this advice but took steps which further angered the Soviets. He appointed cabinet ministers who were known to be anti-communist. He reduced the number of Soviet military advisers and instead of sending personnel of the armed forces to USSR sent them to Egypt and India where they could receive military training on Russian built equipment without being subjected to the communist ideology.

During his later visits to Moscow Daud began to point out obliquely that USSR was interfering in the internal affairs of Afghanistan. The question of interference came to a head during Daud's visit to Moscow in April, 1977. At the banquet given in his honour by his hosts, Brezhnev criticised the inclusion of some members in the Afghan cabinet, who apparently were not pro-Soviet. He also asked Daud to expel some American experts working in northern Afghanistan. Daud was not prepared to be dictated to, even if it was by his powerful friend in the north. According to Ghaus, Daud banged his fist on the conference table and said that Afghans were masters in their own house and that no foreign country could tell them how to run their own affairs. This seemed to have sealed his fate.

Belatedly he realised that irredentist policies towards Pakistan were doing more harm than good to Afghanistan. An exchange of visits took place between Bhutto and Daud and an agreement was almost worked out. Bhutto was to release the National Awami Party (NAP) leaders who were alleged to be supporters of the Pushtunistan demand and Daud would recognise the Durand Line as the frontier between Afghanistan and Pakistan[51], but before the agreement could be signed Bhutto was overthrown in July, 1977.

General Mohammad Zia-ul-Haq, who had become the Chief Martial Law Administrator of Pakistan, stopped over in Kabul on his way to Tehran to carry forward the rapprochement arranged earlier. To benefit from the enstrangement between Daud and his erstwhile benefactors. Henry A. Kissinger, US Secretary of States, also paid two visits to Kabul to try and improve Afghanistan's relations with USA.

The Shahanshah of Iran also played an important role in trying to wean Daud away from the Soviet Union. Daud visited

Tehran in 1975 and received a 10 year's Iranian offer of $2 billion and an additional $1.7 billion for a railroad from Herat to Qandahar[52]. Mohammad Reza Shah proposed a closer relationship between Tehran - Kabul and Islamabad (a proposal made earlier by Field Marshal Ayub Khan in 1962. Again reiterated by General Mirza Aslam Beg in 1990).

On 5 March, 1978 Daud visited Islamabad. An agreement was reached that Afghanistan and the exiled Pakistani leaders in Afghanistan would tone down the Pushtunistan issue. In return Zia would release the Pushtun and Baluchi political prisoners but apparently details had to be yet worked out as no formal declaration was made.

A month later Daud and his family were brutally assassinated by a group of pro-Marxist revolutionaries who carried out a successful coup against him in April, 1978. Afghanistan moved into the Soviet camp but its people did not. Thus began the tragedy of Afghanistan which has left over a million dead, uprooted 40 percent of its population and led to the largest refugee migration in recent years. The power struggle which followed continues till today.

Notes

1. Statistical Year Book, UNESCO, 1989, p. 101. (Pakistan has an area of 796,095 and France 547,026 Sq. Km.).

2. Gibbs, H.A.R., *The Travels of Ibne-Batuta*. p. 84 as quoted in Frazer Tytler, W.K. *Afghanistan*, Oxford University Press, London, 1967, p. 4.

3. Reshtia, S.Q., *The Price of Liberty* - The Tragedy of Afghanistan, Bardi Editore, Roma, Italy, 1984, p. 26.

4. Holdich, T., Imperial Gazetteer 1906, p. B1.

5. Ibid, p. 16.

6. Ibid, p. 20.

7. Caroe, Olaf, *The Pathans*, Oxford University Press, Karachi, 1988, pp. 381, 382; The Durand Line was drawn by Sir Mortimer Durand, Foreign Secretary of British India in 1893, and agreed upon by Amir Abdur Rahman. It was accepted again by Amir Habibullah in 1905 and by King Amanullah in 1919.

8. Imperial Gazetter, p. 20.

9. Ibid.

10. Statical Year Book, UNESCO, 1989, p. 101. Population estimates vary considerably: 17.8 million (Reshtia), 15.2 million Kabul Times, 3 October 1979; 14.8 million (Asia year Book, 1989; 14.5 million (World Defence Almanac; I have accepted UNESCO figures.

11. Dupree L., *Afghanistan* Princeton University Press, Princeton New Jersey, 1973. Here again different sources give different figures. Peabody gives a figure of 20%; Reshtia (20%); World Defence Almanac (15%).

12. Daily Telegraph, London, 15 May, 1989.

13. Caroe, p. xvi.

14. Dupree, p. 59.

15. The '*Pushtunwali*' is an unwritten code of justice and social behaviour which is partly based on the Holy Quran, Sunnas (traditions of the Holy Prophet - Peace be Upon Him) and the local Afghan tradition.

16. Caroe, p. 318.

17. Dupree, p. 59.

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid.

21. Urban, M., *War in Afghanistan*, St Martins Press, New York, USA, 1988, p. 2. Also see Bellow, H.W. *Races of Afghanistan*, Publications, London, pp. 114, 116.

22. Dupree, pp. 59 - 64.

23. Daily Telegraph, London, 15 May, 1989.

24. Masotoshi Konishi, *Afghanistan*, Kodonsha International, Tokyo, 1975, p. 30.

25. Dupree, p. 319.

26. Hyman A., *Afghanistan under Soviet Domination* 1964 - 1981, The Macimllan Press Ltd., London, 1982, p. 38.

27. Griffith, J.C., *Afghanistan*, Key to a Continent, Andre Dentoch Ltd., London, 1981, p. 18.

28. Ibid, p. 19.

29. Ibid.

30. Dupree, 319.

31. Imperial Gazetteer. painting of Dr. William Brydon in tattered clothes sitting on a tired horse can be seen at the Tate Gallery, London.

32. Griffith, p. 57.

33. Ghaus, A.S., *The Fall of Afghanistan*, Perganon - Brasseys International Defence Publishers, Washington DC., USA, 1988, p. 23.

34. Caroe, p. 464.

35. Arnold A., *Afghanistan, The Soviet Invasion in Perspective*, Hoover Institution Press, Stanford University, Stanford, California, USA 1981, p. 10.

36. Hyman, p. 42.

37. Ghaus, p. 67.

38. Ibid, p. 69.

39. Ibid, p. 67.

40. Grassmuck G., L. W. Ademec, France H. Irivan (ed) Afghanistan - *Some New Approaches*, University of Michigan, USA, 1969, p. 156.

41. Ibid, p. 157.

42. Hyman, p. 46.

43. Ibid.

44. Ghaus, p. 88.

45. For details of the election process see Griffith, pp. 164 - 166.

46. Taizi, S.Z. unpublished Ph.D., Thesis "Saur Revolution" at University of Peshawar, 1989. p. 20. The Ikhwan ul Muslameen was founded in Egypt in 1929 by Hassan Al Banna. It opposed the tendency towards Muslim countries moving towards secular regimes. Hassan was executed in 1949 and the Ikhwan ul Muslameen was banned. It however continued to operate clandestinely in Egypt, Syria, Sudan and other Muslim States. The goal being to establish Islamic States in countries where Muslims form the bulk of the population.

47. Bradsher, H.S., *Afghanistan and the Soviet Union*, Duke University Press, Durham, 1985, p. 17, 18.

48. Ibid, p. 29.

49. Taizi, p. 21.

50. Kakar, H., *The Fall of the Monarchy in 1973* article in International Journal of Middle Easters Studies Vol. 12 May, 1978.

51. Bhutto, Z.A., *My Dearest Daughter*, Benazir Bhutto, 1989, p. 31.

52. Heritage Foundation Background No. 101, 25 October, 1979, p. s; Ghaus, p. 149.

PART-II
THE CONFLICT

1 Saur Revolution

> "You know the gamble is lost. We played our hand but lost. Sooner or later a small minority will seize power and by force of arms rule over the entire people. Of course communism will never be accepted willingly by the Muslim people"[1].
>
> **Sardar Mohammad Naim**
> Foreign Minister of
> Afghanistan
> September, 1977

The storm, which eventually broke over Kabul on the morning of 27 April, 1978, leaving behind the dead bodies of President Daud and his family, brought with it a socio-economic system which was alien to the deeply conservative Afghan society. A small group of devoted Marxists took upon themselves to turn Afghanistan from an illiterate, poverty stricken, and tribal ridden religious society into a modern socialist state.

The story of the '*Inqelab-e-Saur*'[2] goes back to the times of the Bolshevik revolution. It was then that the seeds of socialism were brought back by some members of an Afghan delegation, headed by Mohammad Wali Badakshi, which went to Moscow in 1919 to attend the October celebrations. Abdur Rahman, a young Afghan, full of progressive and radical ideas propagated them amongst his group members on his return[3]. Mahmud Tarzi (1865-1931), an adviser and mentor of King Amanullah, was also convinced that the Muslims must 'modernise or perish'[4]. He advocated the two

themes of 'anti-colonialism' and 'modernisation' through his bi-weekly paper '*Seraj ul Akhbar*'[5]. His writings influenced the youth of his country who began to demand a change in the existing tradition bound Afghan society. He also influenced King Amanullah who had introduced a number of radical social reforms for which his country was not prepared.

The Russians also took advantage of King Amanullah's anti-British stance and encouraged him to establish closer relations with Moscow. V. I. Lenin wrote a letter to the Afghan monarch expressing appreciation for the desire of the Afghan people to follow the Russian example which had given them strength and independence[6]. The Russian Socialist Federated Republic RSFR agreed to grant Afghanistan monetary assistance annually, construct the Kuska, (on the Soviet border) - Herat - Qandahar - Kabul telegraph line and to provide technical experts. Twelve airplanes were also given by the Soviets to found the Afghan air force. This was the first attempt to make the Afghan armed forces dependent on the Soviets. In return Moscow was allowed to open consulates at Herat, Mainama, Mazar-e-Sharif, Qandahar and Ghazni[7]. This proliferation of Russian consulates in Afghanistan in the late 20s gave the USSR an opportunity to establish closer contacts with the Afghan people.

When Nadir Shah banned the activities of the anti-establishment Afghan Youth Organisation it went underground but continued to participate in debates and discussions on the socio-economic problems of its country. During the first free elections held in Afghanistan in 1947 reformist ideas began to spread. The *Watan* (Nation), *Nida-e-Khalq* (voice of the people) and the Wikh-e-Zalmayan (Awakened youth) began to openly preach their radical ideas. Half of the members of the parliament were either members or supporters of these young Afghans including Sardar Mohammad Daud. By 1951 student power in Kabul had begun to make its presence felt. A 30-strong student union emerged. Shah Mahmud, the then prime minister, banned the unions and imprisoned the leaders. The young saplings, however, found fertile ground when Prime Minister Daud turned towards the Soviets for military and economic aid. For along with hardware and technicians came advisers, KGB (Soviet Secret Service) and GRU (Soviet Military Intelligence) agents disguised as experts. Because of their presence socialist ideas were further nurtured and the saplings took root. Between 1961 and 1970 a

total of 7,000 junior military officers had been sent to USSR and Czechoslovakia for training[8]. This created a large reservoir of pro-Marxist elements in the Afghan armed forces.

In the meantime demands for internal reforms including removing illiteracy and freedom of speech by the young Afghans grew. They however did not deviate from their traditional religious practices even while criticising the royal household and the clergy though they were imbued with socialist ideas and were critical of US policies in the region. The *Wikh-e-Zalmayan*, however, lacked leadership and soon split into Pushtun and Tajik factions and into Sunni and Shia groups thus losing their effectiveness.

The Peoples Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA)[9]

Taking advantage of the provision of the new constitution, which came into effect on 1 October, 1964, permitting, at least in theory, the formation of political parties, a number of unofficial groupings began to emerge. The most important was the Peoples Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), a party that was later to play a crucial role in the history of contemporary Afghanistan. Even before the new constitution came into being Nur Mohammad Taraki, Babrak Karmal and a few other like-minded revolutionaries began to organise discussion groups among the literate Afghans in Kabul[10]. As their numbers grew more practical steps to achieve their objective began to be planned. Some important personalities joined the organisation. Nur Mohammad Nur did so in 1963, Abdul Wakil, Abdur Rashid Arian and Saleem Masudi became party members in 1964. The PDPA was, however, formally formed at Nur Mohammad Taraki's residence on 1 January, 1965. Thirty young men gathered at his house and unanimously elected him as a member of the Central Committee and the Secretary General of the Party[11]. Babrak Karmal, Nur Mohammad Nur, Anahita Ratebzad and Hafizullah Amin were made Deputy Secretary Generals.

Nur Mohammad Taraki

Taraki was a Gilzai Pushtun from Ghazni who rose from humble beginnings to become the president of his country. He was born on 14 July, 1917 and began his life as a domestic servant. He went on to become a clerk with a Pushtun trading company in Bombay (1934-1937) where he came into contact with

the Communist Party of India. He was introduced to Mahatma Gandhi's 'non violence' philosophy, and Nehru's socialist ideas by Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan head of the 'Khudai Khidmatgar' (Red Shirts) and a well known Pushtun leftist leader of the North West Frontier Province. Taraki later became the deputy chief of the Afghan news agency 'Baktar'. Through his own paper '*Angar*' Flame he popularised classical Soviet literature. His paper was banned in 1951 and he himself was sent out to Washington where he served as a press attache. While there he declared his opposition to Daud when the latter became the prime minister in 1953.

On returning to Kabul in 1956 he was hired as a translator by US AID and in 1958 he opened his own translation service. Taraki's conversion to communism appeared to have been gradual but by the early sixties, he had begun to convert his younger followers to socialist ideas. By 1963 he was working full time for the PDPA[12].

He started a newspaper '*Khalq*' (the people) which propagated Marxist - Lennist ideas. It could, however, only publish six issues before being banned on 23 May, 1966. It was his writings on social issues which gave him prominence amongst the educated class and attracted Soviet attention. He advocated a Soviet model for the economic development of Afghanistan. The Soviets translated his writings into Russian and paid him for his efforts cultivating him to serve their interests. Forty nine years old at the time of the inception of his party he was considered to be more of a romantic revolutionary, an intellectual who could arouse people to socialist ideas but not having the charisma or ability to implement them. Because of his opposition to the government and the ruling Mohammadzai family Taraki was often jailed or put under house arrest which only increased his bitterness against them. Taraki's main supporter was Babrak Karmal even though he came from a completely different background. Their methodology of achieving their dreams was also not similar hence a split was, therefore, to come sooner or later.

Babrak Karmal

Babrak Karmal was 12 years younger than Taraki. He was born on 6 January, 1929 in Kamari near Kabul. Karmal, though a Gilzai Pushtun, came from a Tajik Persian speaking noble family. He was the son of an army general and related to Daud. Karmal

attended the elite German run school in Kabul finishing his studies there in 1948. He took part in radical political activities as a student and went to jail in 1953 where he stayed for 3 years. While in jail he came in contact with fellow prisoner Mir Akber Khyber and converted to communism. After performing his tour of duty with the army he joined the Kabul University from where he got his law degree in 1960[13]. He became a politician and was elected to the Parliament in 1964 and again in 1969. He opposed government policies but unlike Taraki he was loyal to the Mohammadzai family. He supported the pro-Soviet orientation of Daud. Babrak played a prominent role in the leadership of the leftist movement getting his main support from the student community. Some writers considered him to be a KGB agent working for the Soviet Embassy[14]. A fact denied by Afghan experts at the Institute of Oriental Studies in Moscow[15].

Hafizullah Amin

The third important member of the PDPA at the time of its formation was Hafizullah Amin who later was to replace Taraki as the president of Afghanistan. Amin, a Gilzai Pushtun, was born in 1920 in Paghman in the province of Kabul[16]. Like Taraki, he belonged to the lower middle class but unlike him he took his studies seriously. Supported by government funds for bright students, he completed his university education and obtained a Bachelors degree in science from the Kabul University. He went on to study at Columbia University, New York, under the American AID programme where he qualified for a Masters degree in educational administration. Although considered "a very decent sort of guy"[17] by a family in the United States with whom he lived, he was to display a singular ruthlessness and brutality when he acquired power.

While Taraki was exposed to Marxist teachings when in Bombay Amin, strangely, picked up leftist ideas during his stay in the United States between 1957-1958 and again during 1963 to 1965. Henry S. Bradsher, an Afghan expert and a specialist in Soviet affairs, claims that communist literature printed in the United States was often found in Amin's room. Bradsher goes on to say that he (Amin) came into contact with Soviet agents while in the United States but Amin in his official biography, denies that his political beliefs were formed in America and credits his own analysis of the conditions of the working class in his country for

his becoming a communist[18]. Despite studying in USA he never developed a fondness for that country.

It is interesting to note that both the KGB and the CIA were trying to build up cells, within the Afghan students community living in the United States. These could be useful in promoting their interests in Afghanistan when the students returned to their country.

Amin formed an Afghan Students Association (a progressive organisation) while in America in 1963 which he claimed was part of the Afghan leftist movement[19]. Because of his anti-government activities Amin was called back to Afghanistan without completing his doctorate. Bruce Amstutz, Deputy Chief of Mission at the US Embassy in Kabul from 1977 to 1979, on the other hand, writes that Amin failed his doctoral examination at Columbia and that is why he had to give up his further studies. On his return Amin formally joined the PDPA which had come into existence during his absence.

PDPA's Political Leanings

The party's programme did not mention Marx or Lenin at all. However the constitution of the party was kept secret till 1978 which clearly stated that the PDPA is a communist party[20]. Article I of the PDPA's constitution gave primacy to the party which was to be "the highest political organ and the vanguard of the working class and all labourers in Afghanistan". The PDPA's ideology was to be based on the practical experience of Marxism and Leninism. Article V enjoined on each member of the PDPA to learn the political theories of Marxism and Leninism. The party was to "expand and strengthen the friendly relations between Afghanistan and the Soviet Union"[21].

G. M. Kornienko, the chief expert at the Institute of Oriental Studies, Moscow and a former first deputy foreign minister of USSR and Professor Yuri Gankovsky, a well known Soviet expert on Afghanistan and Pakistan, both insisted that the PDPA was not a communist party. According to them the PDPA did not take part in any international conference of communist parties nor was it invited to attend any of them - although the Tudeh party in Iran was. The PDPA was not included in the official list of communist parties published in the Soviet Union. They did, however, admit that some members of the PDPA called themselves communists[22].

The statement of Kornienko and Gankovsky have been substantiated as the Encyclopedia of World Political Systems does not list any communist party in Afghanistan. The PDPA did approach the Central Committee of the CPSU to recognise it as a working class party. However the Soviets did not grant it complete recognition because Moscow had reservations about the social composition of the party and were not certain about the tactics they would follow in the future. Even though the PDPA was not officially a communist party, its organisational structure was modelled along Soviet lines using nomenclatures like full member, alternate members, central committee, secretary general of the party. Members were addressed as 'comrades'. The constitution was replete with the stock phrases used by communist parties around the world namely "struggle against imperialism" and reactionaries. Words like "fighting along side the Leninist Party of the Soviet Union were commonly used. Though PDPA called itself "national democratic" its communist character could not be hidden.

Official Policy of The PDPA

The objective of the PDPA was to build a socialist society founded on the voluntary union of the progressive people of Afghanistan.

The declared policy of the PDPA was based on: (1) the sacred religion of Islam; (2) ensuring democracy; (3) active and positive neutrality: (4) good neighbourliness; (5) peaceful coexistence and respect for the UN Charter[23]. None of these were adhered to. The top leadership of the PDPA de-emphasised religion; could not broaden their base; moved away from the traditional neutrality; raised irredentist claims against neighbouring countries and violated the UN Charter.

The main ingredients of the policy of the PDPA at the time of the April, 1978 coup were: introduction of democratic land reforms which involved taking away land from the wealthy land owners and distributing it amongst the landless without giving compensation; abolishing the existing feudal - tenant relationship; ensuring women's equality in Afghan society; solving the nationalities problem by giving them greater autonomy in the use of their local languages; strengthening the public sector; increasing investment in industry; enlarging education and public health sectors; expanding relations with the Soviet Union;

supporting national liberation movements in Asia, Africa and Latin America and opposing establishment of military bases[24].

Rosanne Klass, a well known journalist, believed that Moscow closely advised the tiny communist party of Afghanistan which worked underground before the April, 1978 coup d' etat. According to Klass Afghan communist leaders were controlled, paid and ordered directly by KGB officers in the Soviet Embassy in Kabul[25].

The problem faced by the leaders of the PDPA was the recruitment of more members as the deeply religious, mostly illiterate and fiercely independent Afghans would not submit to an alien ideology, more so, since it was contrary to their centuries old tribal values and social customs. The only Afghans who could be receptive to these progressive ideas were the students and teachers at the higher schools of learning who had studied abroad. Members of the armed forces who had received military training in the USSR, also were fertile ground. They therefore, became prime targets of communist propaganda. In the four years between 1967 and 1971 the PDPA made important gains among students and the urban-oriented lower paid professions[26]. Pamphlets appearing in the university aroused their sentiments against the government. "No one will give you your rights. You must seize them" was the slogan being raised[27]

Because of a very narrow base, and the fact that the first ever elections held in Afghanistan in 1965 were on a non-party basis, only three PDPA members were elected in a house of 216. Taraki, the founder of the party, was defeated and so was Hafizullah Amin. The third important member of the PDPA Babrak Karmal was, however, elected. The other two being Anahita Ratebzad and Nur Mohammad Nur.

PDPA Splits

As happens with most political parties in Third World Countries differences between their leaders arise soon after they begin enunciating their ideas of how they intend to achieve the objectives earlier agreed upon. So it was with the PDPA. The party split into Khalq (the people) and Parcham (the flag) in 1967 only two years after it came into existence. The Khalqis led by Taraki and Amin were more radical than the Parchamites. They wanted to bring about political, economic, and social changes even

if it meant throwing out the present system lock, stock and barrel. The Parchamites headed, by Karmal, wanted a more gradual change keeping constitutional monarchy intact and making allowances for Afghan traditions and the clergy. Since Karmal wished to retain the current system his faction was sarcastically dubbed as the royal communist party[28]. Majority of the Khalqis were Pushtuns while the Parchamites had a fair amount of non-Pushtuns amongst them. The Khalqis mostly came from the lower middle class and were less well educated, the Parchamites on the other hand were from the upper strata of society and more urbane. Khalq initially had a larger following than Parcham. Both had supporters in the armed forces with the Khalqi officers in the military outnumbering the Parchamites by 5 to 1[29]. The Soviets however continued to support both the Khalq and Parcham elements of the PDPA keeping their options open.

The differences widened as time passed. Within eighteen months of its formation the leader and his second-in-command went their separate ways. Taraki advocated class struggle and rejected cooperation with others while Karmal favoured a coalition approach. Both factions began to strengthen their respective groups by recruiting additional members. This further pulled them apart as the Khalqis enrolled mostly Pushtuns and the Parcham the Tajiks. So the split which was initially personality-oriented and based on differences in factions slowly took on an ethnic complexion. The animosity between the Khalq and Parcham groups came out in the open in 1973, eight years after PDPA was formally established.

While both were supportive of Marxism - Leninism Taraki wanted to take independent decisions whereas Karmal was more amenable to advice from Moscow as the Parcham was more pro-Soviet in orientation[30]. To quote one example, Taraki refused to obey the directives from Moscow to support Daud's coup against Zahir Shah but Karmal did so and thus earned the confidence of Moscow. Kremlin was not happy about the growing rivalry between the two factions of PDPA. They continued to advise and persuade them to reconcile their differences. Finally in July, 1977 they managed to unite the Khalq and Parcham, with the assistance of the Indian and Iraqi Communist Parties which greatly helped in staging a successful coup nine months later[31]

Professor Gankovsky, was of the opinion that although a

temporary unity had been achieved the PDPA members in the Afghan armed forces remained disunited. According to him there were three, not two, factions of the PDPA in the army. The Khalqis were led by Amin as the chief of the military department of the party. He had with him army Major Mohammad Aslam Watanjar and Air Force Lieutenant General Syed Mohammad Gulabzoi. Important officers in the Parcham factions were Nur Ahmad Nur and Mohammad Rafi. "The third underground leftist organisation in the armed forces was led by Lieutenant Colonel Abdul Qader who had formed a faction of his own in September, 1974" said Gankovsky[32].

As regards Daud he had, during his first tenure as prime minister, (1953-1963), seen the rise of leftist elements in his country. He was however wary of too close a relationship with Moscow. He favoured neither Taraki nor Karmal and is reported to have said "we have no connection with any group"[33]. Since he overthrew the monarchy in 1973 with the help of some Parchamites he did include more members from this faction of the PDPA in his Revolutionary Council and in his cabinet than from the Khalq faction. Also most of the 160 pro-Marxist officials appointed by him belonged to the Parcham group. This was disliked by Taraki and Amin (both Khalqis) who continued to have a grudge against Daud.

What was worrying Daud more was the systematic penetration of the armed forces by the Soviet Union through the PDPA. By early 1978 a substantial element of the officers and even some non-commissioned officers in the army and air force had either joined the Khalq or Parcham faction. Ghaus quotes a BBC commentary in Persian in March, 1978 as saying that a military coup against Daud was imminent[34].

The Coup

On 17 April, 1978, Mir Akber Khyber, co-editor of the daily Parcham, and a prominent communist ideologue, rated higher than even Babrak Karmal, was assassinated by some unknown assailants According to others he was killed by American imperialists. Western writers say that the Russians were behind the assassination as they wanted to create an excuse for an uprising against Daud. Kuldip Nayyar, a well known Indian journalist, suspects the CIA. It could have been the work of Daud opines the Economist. Sher Zaman Taizi, a Ph.D. scholar from

Peshawar, blames Amin for the assassination. The truth may never be known. All the major actors are no longer alive to tell the true story. His funeral procession, two days later, (the delay in the burial was presumably to organise a political gathering) drew an unexpected angry crowd of 10,000 to 15,000 raising anti-imperialist and anti-government slogans. A number of well known PDPA personalities addressed the gathering inciting them to take revenge. "The innocent blood of our martyred colleague was spilled by savage assassins. It would lead to further closing of ranks and more solidarity of revolutionary fighters" said Taraki. Babrak Karmal also spoke on the occasion and incited the crowd against the government. Daud was surprised and shocked to learn that the PDPA, which he had brushed aside as an inconsequential divided opposition, had been able to organise such a large procession united against him.

The President was undecided with regards to the action to be taken against those who had used this occasion to vent their feelings against the regime. It took the authorities another six days to make up their mind and that too with no great conviction. Orders were issued on 25 April for the arrest of six communist politicians including Taraki and Karmal who were to be tried for prejudicing national security. At 10. p.m. on 25 April the police raided Taraki's house and seized some communist literature. By 4 a.m. on 26 April Taraki and Karmal, the two most likely coup planners, were safely behind bars.

But Hafizullah Amin, the third most dangerous opponent of Daud, was still free because he had not spoken at the funeral procession. Later when it was decided to place him under house arrest the police showed gross negligence. Although his house was surrounded visitors were allowed to go in and come out. Amin took advantage of this laxity and sent his son at 6 a.m. on 26 April to find out if Taraki had been arrested. When he got the news that he had been sent to jail, Amin sent his son again at 6.30 a.m. This time with a message for Air Force Lieutenant General Syed Mohammad Gulabzoi, to tell the pro-PDPA officers in the air force to start the pre-planned coup at 9 a.m. the following day (27 April)[35]. He was allowed to receive another visitor at 7.30 a.m. who was given specific instructions for Major Aslam Watanjar, commander of a battalion in 4 Armoured Brigade, and for Lieutenant Colonel Abdul Qader, Chief of Staff Air Defence, to command the ground and air force elements respectively. Both of

them had also participated in the 1973 coup against Zahir Shah. Then came another PDPA member to see Amin. The police at last woke up and refused him entry. Amin's freedom ended soon thereafter. He was finally arrested at 10.45 a.m., but the wheels of the coup were already in motion.

27 April was a Saturday, the first working day in many Muslim countries. At the peak hour in Kabul when the streets were crowded with buses, cars and pedestrians, forty to fifty tanks led by Major Aslam Watanjar, who was at that time the deputy commander of the 4th Armoured Brigade stationed outside Kabul, moved out of their barracks. Their presence on the streets was not considered very unusual. The traffic policemen are reported to have motioned the tanks to pull over to the curb so as to let the vehicles flow smoothly. By 11 a.m. the tanks had reached the Ministry of Defence. Watanjar then took nine tanks and proceeded towards the Arg (presidential palace), a complex within Darulaman, ten kilometres southwest of Kabul, and isolated from the rest of the city. A cabinet meeting under Daud was in progress. Lieutenant General Ghulam Haider Rasuli, the Minister of Defence, left the cabinet meeting and went out to try and stop the rebels from moving any further but could not rally enough loyal troops around him. He never returned as he met with an accident and was immobilised. According to some reports he was caught by the communists on 29 April and executed[36].

The 1,800-strong President's Guard, however, remained loyal to Daud and refused to surrender, when ordered by Watanjar to do so. Exchange of fire continued around the palace with neither side gaining the upper hand. Reinforcements were needed to make a breakthrough. It came from the air which tilted the balance in favour of the rebels. Lieutenant Colonel Abdul Qader, deputy commander of the MiG-21 air force base at Bagram, 64 kilometres away, killed his commander, and took off with a few other rebel pilots. Major Syed Daud Tarun of the Air Defence Command had earlier machine-gunned 30 air force officers, at Bagram air base, who had surrendered, in order to frighten others into submission[37]. The aircraft flew low over the capital, strafed elements of 8 Infantry Division who were still loyal to Daud and finally at 3.15 p.m. bombed and strafed the presidential, palace, killing several hundred soldiers.

The radio station, the Khwajaravash military air port and the

Ministry of Defence soon came under the control of the rebels and by 5 p.m. they succeeded in freeing the PDPA leaders from prison. The soldiers and other security elements did not put up any major resistance and most of them stayed aloof. At 7.05 p.m. Radio Afghanistan broadcast an announcement by Colonel Abdul Qader: "For the first time in the history of Afghanistan an end has been put to the sultanate of the Mohammadzai (The Durrani clan to which the later Afghan rulers belonged. The earlier rulers were Saddozai Durrani's). All power has passed into the hands of the masses"[38] said the voice over the radio.

The fighting, however, at the presidential palace, was not over and Daud and his colleagues were still very much alive. the firing continued for most part of the night. It was around 6 a.m. on 28 April that Daud and his family were brutally murdered.

Ghaus says that a group of conspirators entered the room where Daud and his family were present. One of the insurgents asked Daud to surrender. Daud is reported to have replied "I am not surrendering to a bunch of godless aliens"[39]. On hearing this they opened fire and killed them all. Griffith quotes a diplomatic report as saying "first some thirty members of Daud's family were shot in front of his eyes, then several members of his government and finally Daud himself[40]. Kuldip Nayyar gives a different version which is more in line with the official statement given out by Taraki. According to Nayyar, when Daud was asked to surrender by a junior officer he (Daud) shot the Captain in the shoulder on which the men accompanying the officer "replied by machine gunning everyone of Daud's men and members of his family in the room[41]. Radio Kabul reported that the coup leaders wanted to keep Daud alive but he did not listen. According to the radio broadcast "when Daud was asked to come out and order his troops to lay down their arms he refused. Daud and his ministers were killed because they "madly resisted" was the official comment[42].

When dawn broke on the morning of 28 April all that remained of the Durrani family which had ruled Afghanistan for 231 years was the chopped off head of its last stalwart, Sardar Mohammad Daud, which was exhibited for some days on the streets of Kabul. Thousands saw the corpse of their former President being dragged in the streets of Kabul in the Pushtunistan Chowk. He was referred to as the "*Lewanay Sardar*"

(de-mented Sardar) by Taraki and Amin. Along with Daud thirty others were executed including his three sons, their wives and grandsons. Also killed was his brother Sardar Mohammad Naim[43] the new rulers displayed their primitive brutality just as their predecessors had done before.

The April, 78 coup proved to be the bloodiest so far in Afghanistan. Although Taraki claimed that less than 100 people lost their lives, estimates by western sources placed the figure much higher. Louis Dupree, the doyen of Afghan specialists, estimated the 'final death toll' to be 1,000;[44] The Economist believed it to be as high as 5,000[45] and according to ORBIS the casualties could be as high as 10,000[46].

The coup succeeded even though only a few hundred members of the PDPA in the armed forces out of the 90,000 men in the Afghan army (1978) took an active part in it. Except for 11 Infantry Division at Jalalabad, and 15 Division at Qandahar where the commander was shot by a PDPA loyalist[47], other formations in Ghazni, Qandahar and Mazar-e-Sharif tamely accepted the fait accompli. The coup leaders achieved their objective with relative ease because of the lack of proper information by the intelligence authorities, the inability to take decisive action by the government, and the daring shown and risk taken by junior officers who rebelled. The tacit support of a superpower was however, the overriding factor.

Although there is no direct evidence that the Soviets stage managed the operations it can be safely assumed that they were in the know of it as there were at that time 3,000 Russian advisers present in Afghanistan[48] including 350 Soviet military advisers. A retired Russian Lieutenant General interviewed by the author in Moscow gave a figure of 2,000 Soviet advisers in Afghanistan at the time of the April, 1978 coup which according to him included family members. He also said that 90 percent were civilian advisers and the remaining 10 percent were from the Afghan army comprising of technicians working on aircraft, tanks, guns and communication facilities.

It was widely reported, however, that regular contact was maintained between Soviet Embassy officials and the PDPA. A major action which involved using ground and air forces would hardly have been likely without Soviet endorsement. Kuldip

Nayyar, not given to supporting critical references to the Soviet Union, quotes eye witnesses as saying that the Russians were directing and piloting the tanks[49]. The accuracy with which the MiG-21 and SU-7 rocketed the palace also led some western observers to conclude that the aircraft were probably being piloted by the Soviets. Henry S. Bradsher claims that Soviet military officers joined the coup activities and helped and guided the plotters[50]. Another western author says that 350 Soviet military advisers were observed with Afghan army units during the coup[51]. Newsweek quotes a French journalist as saying "we cannot prove that the hand of Moscow was behind this but it certainly looks that way"[52].

According to Soviet experts at the Institute of Oriental Studies at Moscow both the Khalq and Parcham were denouncing some of the policies of Daud but no plan for his removal had been drawn. Kornienko, who was interviewed by the author in the Soviet capital, denied that the Soviets had any hand in the coup. According to him "the Foreign Ministry knew nothing about the coup d' etat and the first information the Kremlin got was from the BBC. Then they asked their Embassy in Kabul to check what was going on" said Kornienko.

To substantiate his contention that the coup was staged without their knowledge Kornienko recalled his conversation with Taraki when the latter stopped over at Moscow airport on his way to Cuba to attend the non aligned meeting at Havana. On questioning Taraki as to why he had not informed the Kremlin about the impending coup, Taraki is reported to have replied "we did not inform the USSR because of the fear that USSR would stop them". "He was right we would have stopped them" added Kornienko. To prove that the Soviets were not aware of the coup Professor Gankovsky quoted a Tass statement[53] which gave incorrect names of the six ministers of Taraki's cabinet eg. M. Aslam Watanjar was referred to as D. M. Aslam. Lawrence Ziring, visiting professor of international relations at the University of Oxford, also quotes the official Soviet news agency as saying that the coup was a "direct expression of the people's will, without the slightest interference (by the Soviets)[54]. However Vladimir Kuzichkin, former KGB officer, who was handling Afghan affairs at the time of the coup, confirmed that the Kremlin could have supported the proposed coup against Daud"[55].

Causes of The Coup

Why did a few junior officers decide to overthrow the government of Sardar Mohammad Daud, who had been elected by a *Loya Jirga* to remain President for seven years only a few months before? Daud after all had staged his coup against Zahir Shah with the support of the PDPA. How is it that five years later they went against him? The foremost reason for this change of heart seems to be that the Khalq and Parcham leaders felt that Daud was going back on his promises and reversing his earlier policies. Daud's visit to Pakistan in March, 1978, his intended visit to Saudi Arabia and Egypt and plans to meet President Carter were further confirmation of his anti-Sovietism.

Further he was systematically eliminating leftist elements in his government. The Khalqis in particular believed that they were being targeted against. By late 1977, there were no known communist ministers in Daud's cabinet[56]. He had banned all political parties except his own National Revolutionary Party and concentrated all power in himself. The press was curbed and all opposition both from the left and from the right was ruthlessly put down. The economic stagnation, Daud's failure to attract foreign loans and the high rate of unemployment were also alienating the populace from the government.

On a personal level Lieutenant Colonel Abdul Qader, who had helped Daud to gain power in 1973, had been humiliated by him. He was removed from his post as the Commander-in-Chief of the Afghan Air Force and sent as commandant of the military slaughter house[57]. He was later rehabilitated but only to become the second-in-command. There is some plausibility to the theory that the coup was being planned for the month of August anyway but was brought forward because of the fear by the coup plotters that they would soon be arrested by Daud and would be given long term imprisonment or be executed. Afghan specialists at the Institute of Oriental Studies, Moscow feel that this was the main reason for the coup. They deny any knowledge of a planned coup in August[58].

Incidentally this does not seem to have been the first coup attempt against Daud. Five unsuccessful attempts had been made earlier, two in 1973 and one every year from 1974 to 1976[59].

The Follow Up

At 7 p.m. on 27 April, General Qader, promoted the same day, came on the air and announced that the "power of the state fully rests with the Revolutionary Council of the armed forces"[60]. Three hours later came another announcement by the military authorities in which it was stated that the new regime would "preserve the principles of the sacred teachings of Islam, would establish democracy and follow a policy of active neutrality"[61]. Surprisingly, only two days after spelling out the future shape of Afghanistan the Military Council handed over power to a civilian set up, which called itself the Revolutionary Council of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan. The Council elected Nur Mohammad Taraki as the President of the Council and Prime Minister of the country. Babrak Karmal, Hafizullah Amin, Abdul Qader and Aslam Watanjar were named as Vice Presidents[62].

It appears that the young army officers who had staged the coup did so at the behest of Taraki and Amin and had no interest other than the removal of Daud. The delay of three days in handing over the reigns of government to Taraki by the military was perhaps to ensure that the situation was stablised and no danger of a counter-coup existed.

The Soviets were the first to recognise the new regime followed, as expected, immediately by India. Bulgaria and Cuba were next[63]. Pakistan delayed the recognition to assess the real nature of the new government. Theodore Elliot, the United States Ambassador in Kabul, was the last envoy to inform the new regime that his country had accepted its legitimacy. The deposed Prime Minister of Pakistan, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, writing from his jail cell thought the coup to be "the biggest development that had taken place in the region since the dismemberment of Pakistan"[64]. General Zia-ul-Haq, the Chief Martial Law Administrator", termed the coup as an internal affair of Afghanistan as indeed it was[65], but it was quite clear that the new regime was a Soviet satellite.

India's Janata government considered the developments as purely a domestic matter and did not consider them to be a factor for instability in South Asia[66]. At the beginning the United States considered the new government to be more national than communist. Even Louis Dupree, the foremost American authority on Afghanistan, did not consider the regime to be communist[67].

Washington avoided dubbing Taraki and his colleagues as communist because then it would not have been able to provide any further assistance to Afghanistan since the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 prevents the United States from giving aid to a communist country. Soviet news agency TASS briefly reported the news about the coup without comments[68]. Reza Shah Pahlavi, however, considered it an ominous development and as "one more move to encircle Iran"[69]. Lawrence Ziring's analysis that the Muslim world showed little inclination to take sides in the coup in Afghanistan proved to be correct. Except for Iran which even supplied arms to the tribal elements in Afghanistan other Islamic countries did not react one way or the other[70].

In Afghanistan the new Marxisit regime was welcomed by a small group of intellectuals with socialist leanings. The more conservative group amongst the educated were apprehensive of the sweeping socio-economic changes being made. They were also concerned at being dubbed 'counter-revolutionaries' if they acted in a manner contrary to the 'progressive ideas' of the PDPA. The vast majority of Afghans living in the rural areas, however, were not immediately affected and were neither supportive nor against the Taraki regime.

As expected there was a purge of those who were not sympathetic towards the PDPA or even those who were fence sitters. Imprisonment and executions took care of them. According to the Heritage Foundation, 3,000 political prisoners were executed, 70,000 were imprisoned and about 100,000 civilians were killed between April, 1978 to September, 1979. Trusted and loyal party workers, irrespective of their merit and qualification were placed in responsible positions. The press and the radio were used to denounce the actions of all the previous regimes. Newspapers, which, till the day before the coup, were publishing the 'good deeds of Daud', became highly critical of his policies overnight. His regime was now dubbed as the 'shameful history of exploitation, of audacity of greed and grandeur'. Daud became the enemy of the state and a villain, a 'time server, a cheat and a maniac'[71].

Not to sound too radical and totally against accepted socio-religious norms revolutionary leaders, who do not have a popular base, include in their initial policy statements the intention to maintain the traditions and customs of their society. So it was

with Taraki. All proceedings began in the name of Allah the Most Benevolent, the Most Merciful (a common practice in most Muslim countries). He denied being a communist. He claimed that there was no communist party in Afghanistan. He called the PDPA left of centre but Islam-based nationalist[72]. "Internal policy is based on the foundation of the sacred Islamic religion" said Taraki[73]. According to him what happened was a desire of young officers to modernise their country which had been kept backward by anchronistic social and political forms. But on taking over, the name of the country was changed to be in conformity with other socialist states. The flag turned red from the previous tri-colour and the word Khalq was added on it[74]. The nomenclature of the political institutions was drawn from Soviet models. The word comrade came into vogue though dropped later and hundreds of people wearing the communist emblem of the red star were directing traffic in the streets of Kabul on 27 April[75].

Khalq - Parcham Animosity

After the common enemy Daud had been eliminated the Khalq and Parcham, who had jointly carried out the April coup, split up again. Now it was a struggle for power between the two rival factions of the PDPA. Although the ministerships were equally divided between the two, with eleven Khalq members and ten Parcham members in the cabinet[76], the hatred that one had for the other intensified. Taraki and Amin both Khalqis and both strong personalities and having a greater support amongst the armed forces held sway. It did not take long for them to crack down on the Parchamites many of whom were removed from their posts in the army, police and civil departments and were even arrested. Even well known Parcham personalities like Babrak Karmal, Mahmud Baryalay, Nur Mohammad Nur and Dr. Anahita Ratebzad were sent abroad as ambassadors so that they may not build up an opposition against the Khalq[77], who now were in full control of state power.

The more moderate elements of the PDPA, who preferred a gradual shift to socialism, had been removed and the hardliners could go ahead with rapid changes in the political, economic and social fields to make Afghanistan part of the socialist family linked inextricably with the Soviet Union. Senior research scholars at the Institute of Oriental Studies in Moscow were of the opinion that both Taraki and Amin did not always agree with the suggestion

given to them by their Soviet advisers. They (Soviets) tried to persuade them not to implement reforms which were unacceptable to the people. According to them Soviet advisers were told by Taraki and Amin "Afghanistan is a special country, you do not know it well enough. You can therefore not understand what we are trying to do and what we can achieve[78].

It is possible that the Soviets were wanting the PDPA to broaden their base by not alienating themselves from the majority of the people. It would also be correct to assume that the Soviet leaders in the late seventies were following a policy of international communism and did attempt to bring Afghanistan into the socialist fold. Most of the new posts were to be held by those who had remaind loyal to the Khalq faction of the PDPA irrespective of whether they were suitable to hold those positions. It was hoped that these party members now numbering about 4,000[79] would be able to implement radical changes.

Being Afghans and fully aware of the conservative nature of their society they should have realised the danger of turning their country around as if it was an inanimate object. It is a common failing among those who rise to power through sheer force that they begin to believe that an iron will and inflexibility is all that is needed to mould a nation according to their wishes.

Unfair practices, systematic replacements of Parchamis by those who could be trusted to support the new leaders wholeheartedly led to discontent even among those in the army and air force who had supported the *'Inqelab'*. Amongst the dissatisfied was Colonel (now General) Abdul Qader, the air force commander, who had mutinied on 27 April, 1978 and later appointed Minister of National Defence. Qader tried to stage another coup and this time against Taraki only four months after they together had overthrown Daud. Unlucky the third time (he had so far, in his military career led two coups) he was arrested along with the Chief of Army Staff Lieutenant General Shahpur Ahmadzai[80]. Several other Parchami ministers were also removed from their cabinet posts. Qader, under duress, confessed that it was Babrak's supporters who helped him to attempt a coup. Taraki dismissed the five Parchami ambassadors, sent out only recently, for conspiring against the Khalqi regime and asked them to return home. They, however, stayed out and according to Bruce Amstutz, Charge - d' Affaires at the US Embassy in Kabul, all of

them drew out substantial amounts of money from their embassies before quitting. They were also supported financially by the Soviets while they remained outside[81].

While this drama was being played out in Kabul the Soviets, like their rival superpower in other parts of the world, were keeping in touch with both factions. On the one hand the Soviets were turning a blind eye to the elimination of the Parchami leaders by Taraki, on the other they were keeping a shadow cabinet of Parchmites under Babrak in reserve.

Decrees by The Taraki Government

Immediately after settling down and having made the usual statements on maintenance of law and order, accountability and the necessity of ethnic cohesion, the Taraki regime announced some sweeping changes which would directly affect the social fabric of Afghanistan. The four decrees pertained to: (1) redistribution of land holdings; (2) elimination of usury; (3) discontinuation of the bride price and (4) removal of illiteracy specially amongst women. If such changes, which affected the daily life of an extremely conservative society, had been made gradually and the tribal elders taken into confidence the chances of their being accepted would have been better. But with a very narrow base confined to a small number of party loyalists and a few groups in the armed forces Taraki had only attacked a hornet's nest. The new policies were opposed by the religious '*pirs*' (saints) because they considered them anti-Islamic and by local landlords as their lands were taken away from them by force and without compensation.

Ironically those landless peasants, who did get the ownership of small pieces of land, did not gain much by the new legislation. They would have benefitted considerably if the entire scheme had been fully analysed and all aspects taken into consideration. No proper statistics were available as to who owned how much and where. Redistribution, therefore, created animosities. Land allotted was often too small to provide any benefit to the farmer. Merely allocating land without arrangements for the provision of other inputs in agriculture namely seed, fertiliser and water management, meant keeping the farmers still at the mercy of the landlord. Those who had been allotted 'surplus land' in areas far away from where they lived were disliked by the locals who felt that they were being deprived of their property to benefit

'outsiders'. In an illiterate and deeply religious society, where daily life is dictated by the *Imam* of the mosque, it was not difficult to make them believe that taking away of land from the landlord without compensation was against Islamic injunctions. The party members, who were sent to the villages, were young, tactless and inexperienced. They could not handle such a sensitive issue tactfully. Intervention by the central government, in any case, in matters concerning the tribe or clan, was rarely acceptable in Afghan society. As often happened before, interference from the centre was resented. Reforms could also not be implemented because of the fighting that was continuing in the countryside.

Stoppage of usury was quite Islamic and would have been accepted in a country where nearly 100 per cent were Muslims but no alternative was provided for granting of loans to the needy. The poor farmers and petty shopkeepers were frustrated at not having access to money when they needed it for the marriage of their children or for the purchase of cattle or to meet some of their other needs.

Another measure which would, in other countries, have been hailed as a momentous decision proved counter-productive in medieval Afghanistan. A grandiose scheme of raising the literacy rate within a short span of time was prepared and large funds were allocated. The state planned to educate 1 million people in the first year, 2 million in the second and 3 million by the end of the third year. In three years they had hoped to raise the literacy level from 10 percent to 50 percent[82]. Taraki's educational reforms not only faltered because unrealistic programmes were made but forced implementation without regard to local customs, specially regarding the education of women, antagonized the people. The Marxist regime did open up hundreds of schools and colleges. the number of students increased from 8,000 to 13,110 in April, 1979[83]. But inspite of this apparent success the opposite affect was being achieved.

Emphasis had shifted towards ideological teaching. Marxist philosophy was given preference over general education. Books on Marx and Lenin were to be read and re-read. Religious education was not only downgraded but ridiculed. All teaching in Afghanistan had been in Pushtu and Dari. The ethnic minorities had always felt deprived as no importance was given to their languages. Taraki should have been hailed by them for

introducing local languages in schools, but it backfired because newspapers in Uzbek, Tajik and Turkomen were more for ideological propaganda than spreading literacy.

The other reform which created bitterness against the government was with regards to the changes brought about in the Afghan marriage custom which was based on Islamic principles and Afghan traditions. The '*Haq Mehr*' (incorrectly translated by some western writers as bride payment) was reduced by decree. This is a requirement in a Muslim marriage contract, which makes it binding for the husband to pay a certain amount of money to the wife for the upkeep in the event of a divorce. It is true that in addition to the Islamic injunction of '*Haq Mehr*' the uneducated Afghans followed the non-Islamic custom of paying money for acquiring a bride. This was totally banned. The age for marriage was fixed as sixteen for girls and eighteen for boys - a restriction which had never been placed before and which in the conservative Afghan society could hardly be implemented. Violations of the age limits was made a punishable offence which angered the people even more.

The overall effect of these reforms was quite the opposite of what they had hoped to achieve because the over zealous Khalqi officials instead of using tact and persuasion resorted to intimidation and force. They punished those who did not accept their ideas, destroyed their property and in some cases even killed them. Such repressive measures created hatred against the Khalqis amongst almost all sections of the Afghan society except the dedicated party members. Even Pravda admitted that the policies being followed by Taraki were incomprehensible to and far removed from the real situation in the country[84].

To strengthen his position Taraki signed a 20-year Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with the Soviet Union in December, 1978 according to which, among other commitments, they were to consult each other on all matters of security.

The Dubs Affair

The US Ambassador in Kabul, Adolph Dubs, was abducted on 14 February, 1979 by a group of four unidentified gunmen belonging to the *Shola-e-Javed* and *Sittam-e-Milli* - both China oriented Tajik communist parties operating in the northeastern provinces of Afghanistan. He was kept hostage in a room in the

Kabul hotel. The abductors were demanding the release of their colleagues Taher Badekshi, Vasef Bakhteali and Bahruddin Baes[85] in exchange for Ambassador Dubs. A 10 minutes ultimatum was given. Unfortunately they were not aware that Bahruddin Baes, the leader whom they wanted released, had already been executed by Amin.

The Afghans approached the Soviet Embassy in Kabul to send a Russian adviser to the Sarandoy (Afghan Special Police) who had been assigned the task of rescuing Dubs. Pot Kluchnekov, who was nominated to advise the Afghan Police, came to the hotel, occupied an adjacent room and studied the situation. Since the interpreter was late in coming no communication could take place between the Soviet adviser and the Sarandoy. The Afghan police also made no attempt to talk to the abductors to gain time for some meaningful negotiations as is the common practice in such cases. they even ignored requests by the US Embassy to do so. The Kabul authorities, did not accept the demand of the abductors and the Sarandoy used force the same day to have the US envoy freed apparently on the advice of Kluchnekov. In the firing that ensued Dubs and two kidnappers were killed[86]. It could not be ascertained whether Dubs was shot at the hands of his captors or by the Afghan police force.

Washington reacted sharply to the unwanted killing of its Ambassador. It sent an official note of protest and accused the Soviet Union of involvement, reduced US aid to Afghanistan by eighty percent and called back a large number of its Embassy personnel. Kluchnekov was asked by his superiors to explain his conduct. His excuse of not having enough time to make a proper plan was not accepted and he was reprimanded for his incompetency. A reply on similar lines was sent to Washington by Moscow. The Soviets also indirectly blamed Dubs for not protecting himself while moving about in Kabul when the situation was not normal. "His car was not bullet proof. He had no guard or escort" said a Soviet military expert at the Institute of Oriental Studies, Moscow.

Amin Versus Taraki

Foreign Minister Hafizullah Amin was waiting to seize power from Taraki. He had played a significant role in planning and executing the coup against Daud and therefore coveted the top most position in the hierarchy. But because he had joined the

PDPA one year later than Taraki he was junior to him and therefore had to reluctantly accept Taraki as the head of the party and the government. He used the Herat uprising as an excuse to push Taraki in the background. On 27 March, 1979 he became the Prime Minister of the country while retaining the Foreign Ministership and thus increased his hold over the country vis-a-vis Taraki. To counter this move Kremlin made Taraki President of the Supreme Council for the defence of the country[87].

By now the Amin - Taraki row had come out in the open with Amin appearing to be the stronger of the two. In the absence of Taraki who had gone to Havana to attend the NAM meeting Amin dismissed the three military officers who could have supported Taraki.

The Soviets were wanting Taraki to stay in power as Amin was beginning to chafe at the bit. Georgi Kernienko, the first deputy Foreign Minister of the Soviet Union, met Taraki at the airport while he was on his way to Cuba. He was instructed to talk to him about the (anti-Soviet) activities of Amin and to try and reinstate Karmal in the government. While doing so he asked Taraki if it was advisable for him to go to Cuba in such circumstances where Amin was becoming so independent. According to Kornienko Taraki was pretty sure that everything would be alright in his temporary absence. Taraki is reported to have said that Amin's activities could be checked. His confidence, in himself was, however, misplaced. Amin was more dynamic, aggressive and ambitious than Taraki who was more of a dreamer spending most of his time reading, writing and watching television. He had given up his powers to Amin whom he mistakenly trusted[88].

Taraki again stopped over in Moscow on his return from Cuba. This time he was received by President Leonid Brezhnev and other important personalities which indicated that some serious action was being contemplated against Amin. At Kabul airport Amin was there to receive his president and nothing seemed amiss. Taraki was advised by the Soviets to reorganise the armed forces and to reconcile with the Parcham even if it meant forming a coalition government of both factions. On 13 September Taraki called a meeting of the Central Committee of the party to discuss these points. Amin opposed the idea of forming a coalition government. He was supported by the majority of the members of the Central Committee.

The Soviet Ambassador was informed about the reaction of Amin. He passed on this information to Brezhnev who sent a message to both Taraki and Amin to meet again.

On 14 September Amin was asked to attend a meeting at the Presidential Palace. At first, sensing trouble, Amin hesitated. Alexandr M. Puzhnov, the Soviet Ambassador in Kabul, rang up Amin, while sitting with Taraki, to say that he should attend the meting as it was an important engagement and he need not worry about his safety. Amin finally agreed and came with his bodyguard led by Major Daud Tarun who was also his Aide-de-Camp.

As Amin ascended the steps with Major Tarun ahead of him firing broke out. Major Tarun was killed and Amin ran back to his car and fled. From here on, there are different versions. Some Afghan experts at the Institute of Oriental Studies in Moscow believe that Amin wanted to get rid of Major Tarun who knew too much. Others felt that Amin wanted to eliminate Taraki and so his guards opened fire first. Some are of the opinion that the fighting was the result of a provocation. The fact that the meeting was called by Taraki, that Amin was first unwilling to attend and the Soviet ambassador's telephone to Amin while sitting with Taraki assuring Amin that he would not be harmed, all point to the fact, however, that it was Taraki who was must have tried to eliminate Amin.

However as it turned out it was Taraki who was wounded. There are different versions of how Taraki died. The official statement said that Taraki died of serious illness[89]. Kuldip Nayar claims that he died of gun shot wounds on the day of the shoot out[90]. A Tass despatch from Kabul on 14 January, 1980 reported that Taraki was strangulated by three Amin aides which is generally accepted as the true story[91]. With Taraki suitably disposed of Amin declared himself as the President of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan.

Amin in Power

By eliminating Taraki from the scene Amin earned the ill will of his Soviet mentors who were trying to patch up differences between the two Khalqi rivals. The Soviets did not approve of Amin's other punitive actions also which were alienating the Afghans from the pro-Marxist PDPA. Gankovsky quotes a

Russian adviser as saying that a close aide of Amin is reported to have said "two million citizens loyal to the Revolution are enough" implying thereby that elimination of a very large number of counter-revolutionaries should be acceptable. The Soviets, however, felt that such repressive policies were undermining the position of the Afghan government and they were leading to desertions and mutinies in the armed forces and a strengthening of the opposition in general[92]. KGB Major Vladimir Kuzichkin called Amin "a smooth talking fascist who was secretly pro-Western". He also suspected him of having links with the CIA[93].

Inspite of the outrage which they must have felt at the wanton murder of their man in Kabul and the deliberate flouting of their directions both Brezhnev and Prime Minister Alexei Kosygin expressed their confidence that fraternal relations between the Soviet Union and revolutionary Afghanistan would be further developed. Amin, for his part was angry with the Soviets for what he thought, was an attempt by them to eliminate him on 14 September.

When Amin became the Head of State he asked Moscow to withdraw Puznov the Soviet Ambassador in Kabul. The request was complied with but not appreciated. Amin's refusal to accept an invitation to visit Moscow added fuel to the fire. It was not very prudent of Amin to take up cudgels against his patrons. On the one hand there was serious opposition at home to his policies and an armed resistance was gaining momentum. On the other hand he was totally dependent on the Soviets for political, economic and military support. Afghanistan by itself, was producing almost nothing. Everything was being imported from the Soviet Union and its allies. Almost all the economic projects were financed and operated by the Russians who had about 5,000 advisers in Afghanistan at that time. Amin and Taraki had also invited or accepted the presence of Soviet military units in their country in addition to the 3,500 to 4,000 military advisers and technicians. Bruce Amstutz, claims that there were three Soviet military units in Afghanistan before the invasion: a 2,500 strong detachment guarding Bagram air base; a 600-man armoured unit guarding the Salang pass tunnel and a small army unit at Kabul airport[94]. In such a situation Amin could not have exercised his independence and still hoped to stay alive. He, however, did not succumb to the pressure being applied on him by the Soviets.

Amin began his one - man rule with the usual diatribes heard in all dictatorial regimes. His predecessor was blamed for all ills. All vestiges of the former strongman were removed. Promises of security and quick justices were made. Some prisoners were released and death sentences commuted. A list of 112,000 Afghans, who had allegedly been imprisoned or killed by Taraki was published. A new constitution was to be drafted. A *Loya Jirga* was held in December to give approval to the new regime. Cosmetic actions were taken to placate the religious elements by repairing mosques and by adhering to traditional practices.

He also tried to gain the confidence of the members of the armed forces who promised to give him their support. The armed forces, however by now, had become thoroughly politicised. There had been mutinees, defections and firing on one's own people. Soldiers and officers had become party members some joining the Khalq others Parcham. All were, therefore, not totally behind Amin. There were also a large number amongst them who were supporters of the resistance movement which was building up against him and against the PDPA. On 14 October a mutiny by the troops of 7 Infantry Division stationed near Kabul was put down but it showed that the military also had elements who had not accepted Amin.

Amin now moved to improve relations with neighbouring countries which were antagonistic to the Soviet Union. During his first speech as President he expressed a desire to eliminate misunderstandings between Afghanistan and Pakistan and also indicated his intention of establishing contact with official and responsible people in Iran. General Zia-ul-Haq visited Kabul on his own initiative in September, 1979 on his way to the NAM meeting at Havana but the meeting remained perfunctory. In Havana Zia met Taraki again. After the meeting Taraki told Agha Shahi who was then adviser on Foreign Affairs to General Zia, to prepare the agenda for a meeting between him and Zia. After Taraki fell Zia asked Agha Shahi to visit Kabul and try and arrange a summit meeting with Hafizullah Amin. Agha Shahi was due to fly into Kabul on a Pakistan Air Force Plane on 22 December, 1979. A heavy snowfall in the Afghan capital blocked the runway making it impossible for the aircraft to land. The visit was re-scheduled for 29 December but by then it was too late.

The Soviet had poured in $1.5 billion[95] in economic aid

between 1954 and 1977. The investment could not be wasted. By August, 1979, eighty percent of Afghanistan's territory was insecure[96]. The Russians could not allow Afghanistan to slip out of its grip. A pro-Marxist regime in the country was losing its hold. It had to be propped up and Amin was not the one who could be trusted to do it. The counter revolutionaries had to be crushed and Soviet soldiers had once again to perform their international duty.

Notes

1. Ghaus, A.S. *The Fall of Afghanistan*, Pergamon Brassey's International Defence Publishers, Washington DC., 1988, p. 194.

2. Named after the Afghan month 'Saur' (April) in which the Inqelab (Revolution) took place.

3. Taizi, S.Z. *Saur Revolution*, an unpublished Ph.D., thesis at the University of Peshawar, Pakistan 1989, p. 10: Other instances of Afghans attending communist meetings were: Afghan representatives attend the Eastern Communist Central Committee Meeting at Berlin in 19191; Two Afghans attended a Congress in Baku in 1920; Between 1920 and 1933 a number of Afghan socialist visited USSR.

4. Hyman, A. *Afghanistan under Soviet Domination-1964-1981*, The Macmillan Press Ltd., London, UK., 1982, p. 24.

5. Ibid.

6. Amstutz, J.B. Afghanistan - *The First Five years of Soviet Occupation*, National Defence University, Washington DC., USA, 1986, p. 11.

7. Taizi, p. 212.

8. Urban, M. *War in Afghanistan*, St Martins Press, New York, USA, 1988, p. 14.

9. In Dari (modified Persian) the PDPA is called Jamiat-e-Democratiqi - Khalq-e-Afghanistan.

10. Arnold, A. *Afghanistan's Two Party Communism: Parcham and Khalq*, Hoover Institution Press, Stanford, CA., USA, 1983, p. 25.

11. Hyman, p. 55; Also see Arnold, p. 25 for details Five members were elected to the Central Committee of the newly found PDPA. Four became alternate members. Other full members were Taher Badekshi, Sultan Ali Kheshtmand, Ghulam Dastgir Panjsheri Shahullah Shahpur and Dr. Saleh M. Zeary.

12. Arnold p. 15, 616.

13. Ibid, p. 19.

14. Amstutz, p. 34.

15. Interviewed by the author at Moscow, 7 May, 1990.

16. Bradsher, H.S. *Afghanistan and the Soviet Union*, Duke University Press, Durham, USA, 1985, p. 41.

17. Ibid, p. 41.

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid, p. 42.

20. Arnold, p. 25.

21. Ibid, Appendix B, pp. 149, 150.

22. Interviewed by the author at Moscow, 7 May, 1990.

23. Keesings Contemporary Archives, Volume XXV, p. 29641, 1 June, 1979.

24. New Times, Moscow, 21-28 May, 1978, pp. 8, 9.

25 Klass, R.(ed) *Afghanistan - The Great Game Revisited*, Freedom House, New York, USA, 1987, p. 52.

26. Bradsher, p. 46.

27. Arnold, p. 30.

28. Hyman, p. 59.

29. Amstutz, p. 78.

30. Ibid, p. 32.

31. Ghaus, p. 193; Washington Post, 13 May, 1979; Fred Halliday says that the mediation between the two parties was carried out by Ajmal Khattak, a Pakistani communist living in Afghanistan.

32. Interviewed by the author at Moscow, 7 May, 1990.

33. Bradsher, p. 57.

34 Ghaus, p. 195.

35. Slinkin, M.F. *History of the Afghan Forces of Afghanistan 1947 - 1977*, (in Russian), relevant extract translated by Dmeitri Novasselov, junior research fellow at the Institute of Oriental Studies, Moscow, Nanka Publishers, Moscow, 1985, p. 179. (Transalation was done specially for the author).

36. Nayar, K. *Report on Afghanistan*, Allied Publishers Pvt. Limited, New Delhi, India, 1981, p. 19. Also see Ghaus, p. 200.

37. Hyman, p. 76.

38. Tass, quoted in Pakistan Times, 30 April 1978: Hammond, p. 52.

39. Ghaus, p. 200.

40. Griffith, J.C. *Afghanistan - Key to a Continent*, Andre Deutsch Ltd, London, Westview Press Ltd., Colorado, USA, 1981, p. 10.

41. Nayar, p. 19.

42. Keesings Archives, Volume XXIV, p. 29037, 23 June, 1978.

43. Dawn, 1 May, 1978. Prominent persons killed along with Daud were: Foreign Minister Sardar Mohammad Naim (Daud's brother); Defence Minister Ghulam Haider Rasuli; Home Minister Abdul Kabir; Political Affairs Minister Syed Abdullah; Air Force Chief General Mohammad Musa.

44. Urban p. 8.

45. Economist, 6 May, 1978, p. 67.

46. Orbis, Spring 1979, p. 100.

47. Urban, p. 14.

48. Hammond, T.T. *Red Flag over Afghanistan* Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado, USA, 1984, p. 54.

49. Nayar, p. 18 - note.

50. Bradsher, p. 83.

51. Bradsher, p. 83.

52. Newsweek, 15 May, 1978, p. 71.

53. Tass, 2 May, 1978.

54. Ziring L. Buffer States in the Rim of Asia, article in Malik, H.(ed) *Soviet American Relations with Pakistan*, Iran and Afghanistan, St. Martins Press, New York, 1987, p. 109.

55. Amstutz, pp. 37, 38.

56. Ghaus, p. 191.

57. Hammond, p. 52.

58. Interviewed by the author at Moscow on 7 May, 1990.

59. Bradsher, p. 68: Also see Amstutz p. 87 - Five real or alleged coup d' etat attempted against Daud.

60. Dawn, 28 April, 1978.

61. Dawn, 4 May, 1978.

62. Dawn, 3 May, 1978: Babrak Karmal appointed Vice President and Deputy Prime Minister; Hafizullah Amin appointed Foreign Minister and Deputy Prime Minister and Aslam Watanjar Communication Minister and Deputy Prime Minister.

63. Economist, 6 May, 1978, p. 67.

64. Bhutto, Z.A. *My Dearest Daughter*, Benazir Bhutto; 1989, p. 36.

65. Dawn, 19 May, 1978.

66. Bhargava, G.S. *South Asian Security After Afghanistan*, Lexington Book Ltd., Toronto, 1983, p. 33.

67. Far Eastern Economic Review, 19 May, 1978, p. 14.

68. Pakistan Times, 30 April, 1978.

69. Bradsher, p. 86.

70. Malik, H. (ed), *Soviet American Relations with Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan*, St. Martins Press, New York, 1987, p. 109.

71. Kabul Times, 4 May, 1978.

72. Far Eastern Economic Review, 19 May, p. 14.

73. Ibid.

74. Keesings Archives, volume xxv, p. 29642, 1 June, 1979.

75. Dawn, 30 April, 1978.

76. Hyman, p. 81.

77. Bradsher, p. 87: Karmal went to Czhechoslovakia; Nur to Washington Anahita to Yugoslavia.

78. Interviewed by author at Moscow, 7 May, 1990.

79. Amstutz, p. 31: Khalq 2500; Parcham 1500; Amin claimed that PDPA had 15,000 members at the time of the coup.

80. Hyman, p. 83, 84.

81. Amstutz, p. 39: Nayar, p. 24.

82. Hyman, p. 93.

83. Ibid, p. 94.

84. Pravda, 17 October, 1980.

85. Keesings Archives, Volume XXV, p. 29643, 1 June, 1979.

86. Account given to the author by the Institute of Oriental Studies Moscow and also obtained from the diary of a Pakistani Ambassador.

87. Malik, p. 110.

88. Reshtia, S.Q. *The Price of Liberty - The Tragedy of Afghanistan*, Bardi Editoric, Roma, 1984, p. 47, 48.

89. Radio Kabul, 10 October, 1979.

90. Nayar, p. 39.

    Kuldip Nayar gives a different account. According to him Taraki was wounded in the shoot out on 14 September (not 16 September as others report) and he died the same night in hospital. The nurse was killed to keep the truth from coming out.

91. Facts on File, 18 January, 1980, p. 27.

92. Izvestia, 4 May, 1978.

93. Urban, p. 40; US Foreign Policy Document No.431, 23 January, 1980, p. 844.

94. Amstutz, p. 46.

95. Economist, 6 May, 1978.

96. Survey published in Le Monde in August, 1979.

2 Resistance

> "Every adult Afghan is a fighting man and if provided with a rifle and allowed to fight in his own way and on his own ground he is as redoubtable an enemy as his fellow countryman who has undergone military training".
>
> **Major Cubit**
> Indian Army, 1906.

Resistance against central authority is endemic to the socio-political culture of the Afghans. Uprising and revolts against unpopular measures are not a new phenomena in Afghan history. Changes of government have hardly ever been achieved without violence. Rulers have been assassinated, forced to go into exile or made to change their policies whenever they introduced measures which went against perceived Islamic beliefs and age-old Afghan traditions.

It was, however, for the first time, during the Taraki-Amin era, that a vast majority of the population rose up against the forcible introduction of radical socio-economic reforms. The persecution and resistance that followed led to the mass migration of Afghan men, women and children to neighbouring lands. Along with the *Muhajireen* (refugees) came those who were determined to go back into Afghanistan and wage a *Jehad* (Holy War) against the communist regime in Kabul. These *Mujahideen*, who had been given sanctuaries in Pakistan, were initially disorganised. Their struggle against a godless creed was confined to sporadic and uncoordinated attacks by independent groups of freedom fighters. More and more were coming across the Durand Line as the

fighting intensified inside Afghanistan between government forces and the counter-revolutionaries.

In addition to providing humanitarian assistance to the hundreds of thousands of Afghan refugees, General Zia, for whom this was a religious duty, also gave his whole hearted support, both covertly and openly to the *Mujahideen* cause. It did not need much effort to arouse the conscience of the Western world on this human tragedy. In the seventies USA and its allies were determined to contain the tide of communism and were more than willing to support proxy wars against the Soviet Union and their satellites.

So, foreign aid, including weapons for the *Mujahideen*, began arriving in large quantities through the port of Karachi or down the Karakorum Highway. Rawalpindi and Peshawar became the entropot for CIA supplied military hardware. A chain had to be established for the money and weapons to reach those who were engaged in an undeclared war in Afghanistan against a Russian supported regime.

The *Mujahideen* had to be organised into identifiable groups so that some kind of control could be exercised over them. Since, Pakistan had a military government at that time the Inter Services Intelligence Directorate (ISI) was given the task to act as the coordinator of all military assistance being provided to the *Mujahideen* by friendly nations[1]. The decision by General Zia to give this responsibility to Lieutenant General Akhter Abdur Rahman, his Intelligence Chief, was understandable as the activities of foreigners inside the country lay squarely within the purview of intelligence agencies. Since these activities involved receipt and supply of weapons the ISI was best suited to deal with them. The role of the Foreign Office was confined to the political aspect of the resistance movement.

From sticks and stones, in the early phase of the Resistance to the Stingers and Blowpipes in 1986 all passed through their hands to be distributed according to their assessment of the effectiveness of the various resistance groups. The CIA/ISI combination began with the weapons being supplied by the United States and disbursed through the ISI. This was necessary as it would not have been right for the CIA to deal directly with *Mujahideen* leaders. General Akhter thus organised, planned and coordinated one of the biggest clandestine operations since World War II.

The weapons and humanitarian assistance had to be channelised through the Afghan leaders. The first task of the government of Pakistan was, therefore, to reduce the over 50 different political groups that had put up their offices in Peshawar to a more manageable number. General Zia gave this task to the Martial Law Administrator of the Frontier Province, Lieutenant General Fazle-Haq, who, after a great deal of persuasion and pressure, managed to limit the groups. They were persuaded to merge into seven major components each of whom would have a number of field commanders under their control[2].

The resistance groups which were based in Peshawar and recognised by Pakistan and also by the aid giving agencies were: (1) Hizb-e-Islami (Islamic Party) Hikmatyar faction; (2) Hizb-e-Islami (Yunus Khalis faction); (3) Jamiat-e-Islami (Islamic Society); (4) Jabha-e-Najat-e-Milli-Afghanistan (Afghan National Liberation Front); (5) Harakat-e-Inqilabi-e-Islami (Revolutionary Islamic Movement); (6) Mahaz-e-Milli Islami (National Islamic Front of Afghanistan and (7) Ittehad-e-Islami (Islamic Alliance).

Hizb-e-Islami (HI)
(Gulbadin Hikmatyar)

Hizb-e-Islami is the strongest and most effective political grouping in the Resistance Alliance against the Kabul regime. Its leader. 'engineer' Gulbadin Hikmatyar, was born in 1947 in Kunduz, capital of the northern province by the same name, Hikmatyar is a Kharuti Pushtun of Gilzai origin. His parents were Ghaznavis. Unlike some other *Mujahideen* leaders he has no connections to the royal family, nor has he any religious lineage. He comes from a middle class family, is conservative but not a *mullah*. He believes in modernism as long as it does not clash with Islamic tenets.

He received his early education in a local school and later joined the Military Cadet School of Mahtabqala. He was, however, rusticated for political activities. After graduating from the Sher Khan High School he entered the Kabul University to pursue his studies in engineering, but could not obtain his engineering degree.

Hikmatyar, was from his early age, inclined towards politics. When only 21 years old he formed an Islamic movement called the Muslim Youth Organisation which initially had only ten

adherents. Three years later Hikmatyar was in jail for killing a communist student by the name of Saidal but he could not have been directly involved as he was released in 1973. He opposed President Daud's Socialist policies and had to go underground to carry out his activities against the government. To escape from persecution he came over to Pakistan in 1974 from where he clandestinely organised a resistance movement against his country's pro-Soviet regime. He took part in the uprising in the Panjsher valley in 1975. Later, his followers managed to overrun government positions in the provinces of Laghman and Paktia close to the Pak-Afghan border.

He has all the qualities needed to be accepted as a leader amongst the wild and fearless tribesmen. He is young, educated and eloquent. He is self assured, simple and hardworking, forceful and single minded in his views and capable of obtaining weapons and logistic support for his party. He has, therefore, been able to attract a large following. According to him he has 300,000 followers but there is a fair amount of exaggeration in this figure. His organised cadres number not more than 30,000[3] approximately 4,000 of whom are full time fighters[4]. He has good contacts with the Jamiat-e-Islami, Pakistan and with other countries, particularly with Saudi Arabia, which provides him with most of the financial support. This helped him to establish the first and only clandestine radio broadcasting station operating from inside Afghanistan. He was initially backed by USA which after the Soviet withdrawal turned away from him due to his uncompromising attitude.

He remains a controversial figure. He is loved by his own group but not liked by his contemporaries nor by the Western press because he is considered to be too independent, even arrogant and intolerant. He joins and quits alliances at his own sweet will. He is no doubt very ruthless in his actions and it is generally believed that he does not hesitate to eliminate those who stand in his way. He is most feared, most hated, but respected by many, which is the reason why other leaders of the Alliance also have a certain amount of reservations about him. The late President Zia gave him the maximum support[5] as he was fiercely anti-Soviet and strongly in favour of continuing the *Jehad*. Lieutenant General Hamid Gul, the former Director General ISI, while praising Hikmatyar and considering him to be heading the best organised group among the Afghan *Mujahideen* denied that

General Zia had any favourites and insisted that the President treated all *Mujahideen* leaders alike. "Not once did General Zia tell the ISI to give more weapons to this or that party" said Hamid Gul. According to him the criteria for weapons supply to the respective *Mujahideen* parties was scientific, and professional based on performance on the battlefield, organising ability, discipline and integrity[6]. However, almost all foreign writers, correspondents and journalists who are either based in Pakistan or have spent months inside Afghanistan have felt that the so-called fundamentalists parties got the lion's share. Those European diplomats in Islamabad who took a direct interest in the Afghan conflict shared this view. Some Afghan leaders interviewed by the author complained that Hikmatyar was the favourite child and got the maximum number of weapons.

Hizb-e-Islami is mainly composed of Pushtuns from the eastern and northeastern part of Afghanistan where they are most effective. They however also operate around Qandahar and Kabul (Paghman hills). It is the best organised, most disciplined and the most effective of all organisations. Other Afghan leaders of course do not think so. They feel that Hikmatyar and his Hizb-e-Islami had been built up by the ISI and General Zia.

Hikmatyar insists that the future government of Afghanistan must be 100 percent Islamic. He is not prepared to have a coalition with any communist-oriented party. In-fact, though a great supporter of free and fair elections, he is not willing to concede the right to vote to those who are members of the PDPA. He does not treat the Afghan Shias as a seperate political entity and is against allocation of seats to them on the basis of their faith[7].

While he was always against the USSR he has of late turned against the United States as well for not giving his organisation the required assistance. Both Washington and Moscow are afraid that he would establish a Khomeni-type Islamic government in Afghanistan and are, therefore, not in his favour which they feel would not be in their interest. This of-course is not strictly correct. Though in favour of an Islamic government he is not an inward looking orthodox clergyman. However, he does not like being dictated to, not even by his Pakistani hosts nor by his own colleagues.

He was appointed foreign minister in the Afghan Interim

Government (AIG) but he left the AIG calling it defunct and non-existant as it had not been able to move into Afghanistan, as projected at the time of its formation nor had it held the promised elections within 6 months. Since it had also outlived its tenure of one year, Hikmatyar does not acknowledge its existance any more. The main reason for his leaving the AIG were his differences with the other Afghan Leaders which are deep-rooted and presently irreconcilable.

His alignment with the former defence minister in the Najibullah regime, General Shahnawaz Tanai, who staged an unsuccessful coup against the Afghan President on 6 March, 1990, was resented by his one-time partners. Hikmatyar defended himself by saying that he was prepared to give amnesty to anyone who would come over to his side including Najibullah. He is determined to continue the resistance against the PDPA even if the United States and other friendly countries stop giving weapons.

Hizb-e-Islami (HI)
(Khalis group - Maulvi Mohammad Yunus Khalis)

Because of Hikmatyar's intolerance towards others his former colleague and deputy leader Maulvi Yunus Khalis broke away from him in 1979 and established his own faction of the Hizb. Khalis was born in 1920 in Qazian Village of Gandamak in the eastern province of Nangarhar. He received his early education in Peshawar, Pakistan. After completing his studies in Peshawar he went back to his homeland in 1939 where he was engaged as an *Imam* (prayer leader) in a mosque. When political activities began to be accepted in Afghanistan, Khalis joined the Resistance against the regime. In 1973 Daud clamped down on all anti-government movements which forced Khalis to leave his country again. In 1978 he went back to Afghanistan this time to lead a struggle against an unpopular regime in Kabul.

He is an elderly and rugged Pushtun who commands considerable respect from the field commanders inside Afghanistan because of his frequent presence on the battle-front. With deep-set eyes and a flowing henna coloured beard, wearing his customary cartridge belt and surrounded by a group of Kalashnikov carrying Afghan tribesmen he looked every inch a 'fighting mullah' - a description he very much deserved. No wonder he was the first recipient of the American Stinger

missile[8]. Although nearing seventy, he frequently went across the border from his base in Peshawar to participate in the *Jehad*. He reportedly commanded one of the guerrilla groups in their attack on Jalalabad in 1982. In one of the encounters on the front line his base was attacked by helicopter gunships. Three of his men were killed and he himself narrowly escaped death[9].

Khalis was also counted among the so called fundamentalists. He called the struggle for independence a war between Islam and '*Kufr*' (atheism)[10]. He was not prepared to compromise on the two basic objectives of the *Jehad*: complete elimination of the PDPA, and the establishment of an Islamic state in accordance with the Quran, Sunnah (the tradition of the Holy Prophet - Peace be upon Him) and the Shariah (Islamic judicial system). Besides the anti-Islamic nature of the communist ideology which he dislikes he had a personal revenge to take against the United States because according to him "the two are jointly exploring ways, of enslaving Afghanistan"[11]. His differences with Hikmatyar were not ideological as their interpretation of Islamic values were similar. Where they differed was in the modalities of how to achieve an Islamic state. Whereas Hikmatyar accepted the modern concept of elections Khalis considered them un-Islamic and not practical in the present circumstances where all factions were armed.

When asked about the strength of his party he diplomatically referred me to the defence minister of the AIG obviously not willing to disclose the size of his group. The Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad gives a figure of 10,000 fighters in the Hizb-e-Islami (Khalis) group. Although his commanders had been participating along with others around Jalalabad and Kabul the main operational areas of the Hizb-e-Islami was in the province of Nangarhar, Paktia and Kunar close to the Pakistani border. His men had been laying siege to the oft-mentioned city of Khost but the city remained in government hands. Field commanders who operate under his guidance are Jalaluddin Haqqani around Khost on the Afghan - Pakistan border and Abdul Haq around Kabul.

In October, 1987 he was elected President of the Islamic Unity of the Afghan *Mujahideen* (IUAM) - a political grouping of seven Peshawar-based Afghan parties. The Hizb, both the Khalis and the Hikmatyar factions, is supported by Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States.

General Zia and his ISI Chief did give added importance to the

so-called fundamentalists because in their perception a government in Kabul controlled by the more conservative factions would not come under the influence of Pakistan's adverseries to the north and east. With a purely Islamic government in Afghanistan General Zia hoped to achieve his dream of a solid Muslim bloc of countries in southwest Asia.

Jamiat-e-Islami (JI)
(Professor Burhanuddin Rabbani)

The third major alliance of the *Mujahideen* is the Jamiat-e-Islami, Afghanistan, headed by Professor Burhanuddin Rabbani.

Rabbani is a Tajik whose mother tongue is Dari. He was born in 1947 in Faizabad, the capital of Badakshan province on the Afghan-Soviet border. He first studied in the local schools in his area and later moved to Kabul where he was enrolled in the Abu Hanifa Madrassa. In 1960 he joined the College of Theology at the Kabul University. After graduating with honours he was appointed as a lecturer in the same institution. In 1966 he proceeded to Cairo for higher studies at Al Azhar where he worked on his Ph.D. thesis on the life of Abdur Rahman Jami (the Afghan mystic poet). He founded the Jamiat-e-Islami, Afghanistan in 1967 and was elected its leader in 1972.

Being himself a teacher of Theology at the University of Kabul he gained a lot of adherents to his organisation from among the students and succeeded in building a strong base for himself during those years. Since he was mixing his religious activities with politics and was opposing Daud's flirtation with the Soviets he became a threat to the new republican government. To escape from the persecution of President Daud he left for Pakistan in 1974. Four years later, from his base in Peshawar, he reorganised his party and turned it into an effective resistance group against the Soviets and the communists in Afghanistan. Because of his less orthodox views, his comparatively less rigid attitude and a more humane approach to the members of his group he was able to attract a large number of defectors from other parties.

The Jamiat had been waging guerrilla operations inside Afghanistan since 1974. Its main area of operation was in the Panjsher valley northeast of Kabul where the 'lion of Panjsher' - Ahmad Shah Masud, had earned international fame for his courage, fighting qualities and his easy accessability to the foreign

media. the Jamiat also had field commanders operating in other areas of Afghanistan the most significant being commanders Ismail in the western province of Herat and Zabiullah in Balkh. The Jamiat-e-Islami, was the only party that had offices both in Peshawar and Iran. Like the other religious parties, JI received its support from the conservative Arab States in addition to getting its share from the ISI. The strength of the Jamiat was almost the same as that of the Hizb-e-Islami (Hikmatyar)-around 20,000[12].

Rabbani had serious differences with Hikmatyar although both the Hizb and Jamiat were religiously oriented and wanted a strictly Islamic state in Afghanistan. Their rivalry goes back to their struggle against Daud while still in Afghanistan. Rabbani wanted to remain in contact with the 'good' Muslims, in the Daud's government and through them to get the release of some JI members. He also thought that he could use them to keep the Marxists out. According to Rabbani "this was taken to mean, by Hikmatyar, that I was collaborating with Daud". In addition Hikmatyar did not appreciate Rabbani meeting President Ronald Reagan and other US leaders. The ethnic and personality differences further added to the rivalry between the two. Their views on the Afghan Shias also differed. While he advocated giving the Shias a role in the future government of Afghanistan, Hikmatyar did not want to highlight their special status in Afghan society. Rabbani was not averse to cooperating with the moderates while Hikmatyar and Khalis were not willing to do so.

Ittehad-e-Islami
(Abdur Rab Rasul Sayyaf)

The last of the four conservative parties was the Islamic Alliance for the Liberation of Afghanistan with Abdur Rab Rasul Sayyaf as its leader. He is a Pushtun and was born in 1944 in Paghman, a suburb of Kabul. He studied in the Ibn-e-Sina High School and later graduated from the Theology Department of the Kabul University in 1967. In 1969 he was appointed as a lecturer in the University. Two years later he went to Egypt and got his Masters degree in *Ilm-ul-Hadis* (Sayings and traditions of the Holy Prophet peace be upon him). In 1973 he came to Afghanistan only to be arrested a year later while on his way to the US for legal studies. He spent six years in prison during Daud and later Taraki's regime. He came to Pakistan in 1979 on being released from jail.

Very little is known about this party. It was generally believed that it was inclined towards the Wahabi sect of Islam and hence received most of the support from Saudi Arabia. Sayyaf was elected prime minister of the Afghan Interim Government in February, 1989. He generally supported the policies of Hizbe-e-Islami and the Jamiat. Not much was heard of his military exploits nor mention was made of commanders working under him inside Afghanistan. He had a following of about 20,000 *Mujahideen* mostly in the Paghman Province near Kabul[13].

He has a forceful personality and strongly advocates the continuation of the *Jehad* until "atheism" is wiped out from Afghanistan and an Islamic government is established by the *Mujahideen*.

Harakat-e-Inqilabi
(Maulvi Mohammad Nabi Mohammadi)

The Harakat is counted amongst the three moderate parties based in Peshawar who are opposing the Najib Government in Kabul. The party is led by Maulvi Mohammad Nabi Mohammadi, and was founded by him in Quetta in 1978.

Mohammadi is a Pushtun and was born in 1921 in the province of Logar close to Kabul. His early education was in religious subjects and after completing his elementary studies he became a teacher of religion. He too had been a theologian but did not insist on the orthodox interpretation of Islam. He combined both conservative and modern ideas and as such was not a favourite with either. He was elected to the Parliament in 1969. He migrated to Helmand in SouthWestern Afghanistan in 1973 where he established a religious madrassa. He was arrested by Daud the same year. He came to Pakistan in 1978 when Taraki started his crack down on the clergy. Initially his party was quite strong in the eastern and southern provinces of Afghanistan. However, slowly he lost the support of a large section of his followers as the fighters could receive weapons more easily from the more religiously-oriented groups who got the lion's share of the weapons received from friendly countries. He was cooperative in his approach and willing to join the other groups to oust Najib but did not insist on a continuation of a military conflict after the Soviets had withdrawn their forces.

Inspite of having moderate views Nabi Mohammadi continued

to believe in the traditional form of government in Afghanistan. He still wanted to obtain the consensus of his people on important issues by means of a *Loya Jirgah* (unelected grand assembly of tribal elders) rather than an elected parliament. The strength of his group was estimated at about 20,000[14] operating mainly in Ghazni, Kabul and Herat.

Mahaz-e-Milli Islami Afghanistan
(Pir Sayed Ahmad Effendi Gailani)

Mahaz-e-Milli Islami Afghanistan (The National Islamic Front of Afghanistan) is headed by a descendant of a well known religious family of Afghanistan. Pir Syed Ahmad Effendi Gailani. Born in Kabul in 1933, He comes from a Sufi order of the Qadria sect and claims direct descent from Syed Ahmad Qader Gailani, a most revered Muslim Saint. With these religious credentials he is venerated by his followers and greatly respected in his community. He is also related to the former king. Because of his royal connections and his flourishing car business he lived a carefree life of luxury and wealth. Although he did not hold any government position he was an adviser to King Zahir Shah, which explains his support for the former monarch's return. He studied at the Abu Hanifa Madrassa and later at the college of theology at the Kabul University from where he graduated in 1964.

He remained in Afghanistan even after the Saur Revolution and tried to accommodate himself to the new policies. However, when Taraki began his brutal repression of all those opposed to his ideas and a purge of dissidents followed. Syed Ahmad Gailani decided to leave his country and organise a resistance movement from outside. He moved to Pakistan in August, 1978. It was in December of that year (10 months after Taraki staged his coup) that Gailani formed the National Islamic Front with its headquarters in Peshawar. His intention was to narrow the differences between the various groups and form one resistance party under his own leadership. His attempt to do so, however, proved unsuccessful.

He has a fair complexion, oval face, broad shoulders and a portly figure. Wearing a well cut combination suit and sporting a goatee beard he looks more of a European landed aristocrat rather than a *Mujahideen* leader. Though having a religious background his views on religion are liberal. He does not adhere to the views of his more orthodox companions in the Islamic Unity of Afghan

Mujahideen (IUAM) in matters of dress and appearance. His ideas of the future shape of Afghanistan are also different from the conservatives. He accepted the fact that the Soviets had a deep interest in Afghanistan and his country could not make progress or live in peace unless that fact was recognised. Afghanistan, according to him, cannot afford to act totally against Soviet interests. It has to co-exist with it.

He is well travelled and supported by most Western leaders but he did not receive the military support needed to influence the unfolding events in Afghanistan. His accommodating attitude did not go down well in the emotion charged atmosphere of the *Mujahideen*. His dislike for a well known Afghan leader and non-recognition of his own status, he summed up, in the following Persian couplet-"*Asp-Tazi zer Palan majrooh shuda. Tauq-e-Zarreen bar garden-e-khar me beenam*"[15]. (The pure-bred Arab horse stands wounded while a donkey has been given a golden girdle).

His front has a strength of about 18,000[16] operating in the Paktia province along the Pak-Afghan border. His field commanders were Amin Wardak, who was active around Kabul and Ghazni, and Syed Naim who operated in the vicinity of the capital.

Jabha-e-Nejat-e-Milli Afghanistan
(Sibghatullah Mojeddidi)

Like most of the other Afghan leaders of the Interim Government Professor Sibghatullah Mojeddidi was also a religious teacher. Added to his qualifications as a theologian was his ancestral background. He is connected with the family of the well known Hazrat Sahib of Shor Bazaar in Kabul and is the sole surviving member of the large and powerful Mojeddidi family of Afghanistan. Like Gailani he was also a *Pir* (a religious saint) but of a different Sufi order, - The *Naqshbandi*. He was born in 1926 in Kabul. He completed his religious education from Al Azhar in Cairo in 1953 and later went on to teach law and political science at the Kabul University. He was however not as liberal in his views as those of the other moderate leaders.

Daud sent him to jail in 1953 when he began taking an active part in political activities. He spent four years in prison and left the country when released. He first went to Beirut and then to

Saudi Arabia where he served in the *Rabeta-e-Islami* for one year. He later decided to settle in Scandinavia where he opened an Islamic Centre (1974-1978). Thirty of his family members were executed shortly after the April, 1978 coup. Some years later seeing his country being forcibly moved into the lap of the Soviet Union he decided to come to Pakistan from where he could play a more active role in organising resistance against the leftist regime in Kabul. He established the Jabha-e-Nejat-e-Milli (Afghan National Liberation Front-ANLF) in December, 1978[17].

The important members of his Afghan National Liberation Front were ministers in King Zahir Shah's days. He, therefore, agreed with Galiani that the former king could play a useful role in uniting the various factions in Afghanistan. He did not hide his pro-Zahir Shah stance and continued to use the royal emblem for his Afghan National Front[18]. He was elected the president of the Afghan Interim Government in February, 1989 and like others had serious differences with Hikmatyar. In fact the two dislike each other openly.

His attitude towards religion was more liberal than that of the so called fundamentalists. He favoured the acceptance of non-communist elements in the Kabul regime in any future election in his country which could be held under UN supervision.

According to him he was against the formation of seven different Afghan political groupings in Peshawar. He advocated one single Afghan party which he was prepared to form and lead. But that was not acceptable to General Zia and Lieutenant General Fazle-Haq. He claimed to have given such a proposal to the late President in the plane on his flight to Saudi Arabia which was not given any importance. Apparently the government of Pakistan did not wish to encourage the formation of one Afghan political party for fear of it becoming a PLO-type organisation in Pakistan. He also felt that the ISI and General Zia favoured Hikmatyar who, according to him, received fifty percent of the military assistance from friendly countries[19]. Estimated strength of his group is about 18,000[20] operating mostly around Qandahar and the northern provinces of Farah and Baghlan.

Nine Party Alliance Based in Iran

In addition to the seven parties based in Peshawar there were eight (now nine) recognised parties in Iran. These were: (1)

Shura-e-Ittefaq-Islami; (2) Dawat-e-Ittehad-Islami (Mahaqqiq); (3) Sazman - Nayroye-Islami (Qaher Mohaqqaq); (4) Shohdan - Jehad-Islami; (5) Nuzhat-e-Islami (Akhlaqi); (6) Harakat-e-Islami (Javed); (7) Nasr (Khalili); (8) Hizb-ullah (Zamani); (9) Jabbha-e-Muttahid-e-Islami (Hasan Ruhullah). Only a few of the original eight Tehran based groups were effective while the majority of them were inconsequential.

Very little was heard or known about them as Iran itself remained isolated from the outside world and no foreign journalist or reporter could go inside Iran to report on the attitudes and activities of the Afghan political parties located there. Iran was engaged in a life and death struggle with Iraq anu had no time to direct and control the movement of the *Mujahideen* into Afghanistan.

During his visit to Tehran in December, 1989 the author tried to meet some of the Afghan leaders based there but the meeting which had been previously arranged was 'diplomatically' put off. However, when he vīsited Tehran again in March, 1990 it was possible then not only to meet the spokesman of the Tehran-based Afghan parties, Mr. Ibrahim Khalili, but also an exchange of views on the Afghan confliet with the research scholars of the Institute of Political and International Studies (IPIS) Tehran could take place.

Khalili put the figure of Afghan refugees in Iran at about three million (The more authentic figure is 2.1 million). He preferred not to give the estimates of the number of fighters inside Afghanistan but confirmed that the 9 Parties based in Iran were putting up resistance in almost all the provinces of Afghanistan. The Tehran-9 were mostly Shias from central Afghanistan. They were as anti-communist and anti-PDPA as their compatriots in Peshawar. They were also in favour of continuing the struggle against Najib but had major differences on the power-sharing formula with the Afghan leaders in Pakistan.

Shura-i-Enqelab - Ettefaq-e-Islami

The Shura was established in the Hazarajat area in 1979. It was the best organised Shia party with its own political, social and military wing and with offices both in Iran and Pakistan. Its leader was Syed Ali Behishti. By 1983 the Shura controlled 60 percent of the population in Hazarajat. However its name as a party did not

appear among the nine constituent parties of the Islamic Unity Party formed in July, 1990. The shura had a fighting strength of 4,000 with 8,000 supporters. It operated mainly in the central and northern provinces of Afghanistan.

Sazman-e-Nasr

The Al Nasr group was founded in 1980 and led by Mir Hoseyn Sadiequi and later by Abdul Karim Khalili. It had an estimated strength of 1,500 fighters and about 4,000 supporters, most of them being Shia's from Hazarajat. It mainly operated in Helmand and Bamiyan. It controlled about 25 percent of the population in Hazarajat.

Harakat-e-Islami

This group was led by Mohammad Asif Mohseni(a Hazara). He had the support of about 2,000 fighters and another 15,000 followers mostly from the northern provinces of Faryab, Jozjan, Balkh and Badakshan. In 1990 the party chief was Ismail Javed[21].

The other political parties appear to be on paper only. Professor Rabbani who visited Iran occasionally concurs with this view. Their objective was the same as that of the Peshawar-7 viz. freeing Afghanistan of Soviet soldiers; toppling the illegal Kabul regime and establishment of an Islamic government based on the wishes of the people. They want the Afghan Shias to get their due share in any future government in Afghanistan.

Unlike the Peshawar based Afghan leaders the Afghan *Mujahideen* in Iran did not receive military or humanitarian assistance from friendly countries. Iran was following a policy of *bi-tarfi. Na sharqi na gharbi* - (neither east nor west) and did not become a conduit for weapons to the *Mujahideen*. They, therefore, took decisions independent of pressures from superpowers or from donor countries. The Iranian government appeared to have a greater control over the Afghan *Mujahideen*. Being Shias they accepted the authority of an Ayotollah willingly whose portraits were displayed profusely in Hazarajat. The Iran-based *Mujahideen* were more homogenious and unlike their counterparts in Pakistan amenable to central direction. The Iranian government was keen to ensure that they retain and if possible enlarge their influence inside its eastern neighbour. It therefore, lent its full support to the Tehran-based Afghan parties in demanding their share in the future political set up in Afghanistan.

TABLE 2

Mujahideen factions

Peshawar Based

	Fighting Strength (approximately)
Hizb-e-Islami (Hikmatyar)	30,000
Jamiat-e-Islami (Rabbani)	20,000
Harakat (Mohammadi)	20,000
Ittehad-e-Islami (Sayyaf)	20,000
Nijat (Mojeddidi)	18,000
NIFA (Gailani)	18,000
Hizb-e-Islami (Khalis)	10,000

Source: *Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad.*

Tehran Based

Sazman-e-Nasr Afghanistan	(Abdul Karim Khalili)
Hezbollah-e-Afghanistan	(Zamani)
Jabha-e-Mottcheda-Afghanistan	(Hasan Ruhallah.)
Harakat-e-Islami-Afghanistan	(Ismail Javed.)
Nehzat-e-Islami-Afghanistan	(Akhlaqi.)
Daivet Islamic Afghanistan	(Rahman Ali Mohaqqiq.)
Pasdaran-e-Jehad-Islami Afghanistan	(Mohammad Ali Ehsani.)
Sazman-e-Niruy-e-Islami Afghanistan	(Syed Qaher Mohaqqeq.)
The Islamic Council	(Nadir Ali Mehdavi.)

By 1991, the Tehran based parties were grouped together into one single party called *Hizbe-Wahdat*

Source: *Pakistan Embassy - Tehran, July, 1990. Strength of each party could not be ascertained; The News, 4.9.91*

In addition to the Peshawar and Tehran-based resistance parties a large number of independent fighting groups operated inside Afghanistan. Some correspondents claim that only one percent of the people inside Afghanistan belong to any Peshawar - based party[22]. This would be an exaggeration but it does point out the fact that many fighters inside Afghanistan are not under the control of the Afghan leaders in Pakistan.

The Herat Mutiny

Defections from officers and men of the Afghan Army was going on for some time but generally the armed forces as an institution remained loyal to Taraki. But when Taraki began to arrest some of the senior officers which included the Defence Minister Brigadier Abdul Qader, his Chief of Staff General Shahpur Ahmadzai and Lieutenant Colonel Mohammad Rafi resentment against the government increased. Taraki's secret police AGSA began interrogating army officers and detaining them in Pul-e-Charkhi jail for interrogation. The anger against Taraki was building up amongst the soldiers and it broke out into a full-fledged mutiny, when the army was asked to quell demonstrators against the regime. Almost the entire 17 Division based in Herat refused to fire on them. They mutineed and went over to the *Mujahideen*, taking with them all their weapons and ammunition. The March, 1979 mutiny set the stage for further insurrections.

The greatest anger was directed against the Soviet advisers. Approximately fifty Russians including women and children were hacked to pieces and their decapacitated bodies dragged through the streets of Herat[23]. The town came under the control of the anti-government forces. Immediate reinforcement was sent from Qandahar while 4 and 5 Armoured Brigade moved out of Kabul on their way to Herat to quell the uprising and retake the city. A proper ground and air attack was launched against the 'rebels' in Herat and after heavy fighting the city reverted to government's control. Approximately 5,000 people died in the suppression of the Herat mutiny[24].

This was an important success for the freedom fighters as a major city had passed into the hands of the *Mujahideen*. Not being organised for a defensive battle they lost it after superior forces, particularly air power, were brought against them. Although the Herat mutiny was suppressed by sheer brutal force the flames of

revolt lingered on. Senior Captain Ismail Khan and Captain Alauddin, who were the prime movers of the revolt joined the Jamiat-e-Islami to continue their struggle against Taraki. Ismail was still there (11 years later) fighting against Najibullah's armed forces.

Instead of trying to deal with the causes of the rebellion Taraki, resorted to further arrests and purges in the armed forces causing more resentment and reduction of his support base. The Soviets were angered at the massacre of their advisers and their families and like their protege chose to meet force with force. On 6 April Army General Alexei A. Yepishev, Chief of the Main Political Administration of the Soviet army, came to Kabul not to assess the situation in all its ramifications, but to assess the military requirements in order to put down the rebellion against the Saur Revolution. One hundred more T-62 tanks, 6 MiG-21s, 12 MI-24 helicopter gunships and a few SU-20 fighter bombers was the Soviet answer to the Herat mutiny[25]. Moreover to keep the 'natives' in check the number of Soviet advisers was raised to approximately 7,500 (4,000 military and 3,500 civilians)[26] What was not evident then was that as a consequence of this uprising contingency planning by the Soviet General Staff for a take over of Afghanistan began in real earnest. As a preliminary move to the eventual military intervention the Soviets deployed their first combat unit in Afghanistan. An airborne battalion (400 men) occupied defensive positions around the Bagram airport just north of Kabul[27]

Rebellion in Other Places

In April and May, 1979 Afghan army units rebelled in Jalalabad. A major mutiny occurred in July, 1979 in 14 Infantry Division stationed in Ghazni. A large number of Afghan soldiers deserted and joined the Resistance. The mutiny was quelled but the morale of the regular Afghan army was by now shaken. In the summer of 1979 resistance against the radical reforms spread to the province of Paktia close to the Pakistani border. A major engagement between government forces and the Resistance also took place in the northeastern province of Kunar where two Afghan tribal *lashkars* (group of fighters) crossed back into the Ningarhar province to carry out their '*Jehad*' against the 'communists'. Thirteen government supporters were reportedly

killed. However the Afghan *laskhars* had to withdraw because the Afghan army brought aircraft and superior weapons against them.

A major uprising by the Afghan army against its own government again took place in August, 1979 at the Bala Hissar Fort near Kabul. Officers and men stationed in that garrison revolted against their superiors. The mutiny was however crushed using Soviet troops manning tanks supported by aerial attacks. More than a hundred mutineers were killed in the rebellion. This time another Soviet general arrived to assess the situation. General Ivan G. Pavlovsky promised to send more Soviet arms and increase Soviet advisers.

Radio Moscow continued to blame Pakistan, USA, Iran and China for training 'bandits' for subversive and terrorist activities in Afghanistan. The threat from China to the Soviet Union was played out of all proportion. Igor Belyayev, a Soviet newspaper correspondent, saw the Chinese, carrying out a major aggression into Afghanistan and forcing the Soviets to defend another 1,500 kilometres of borders against the Chinese[28]. Igor must have known that there is only a narrow neck of 32 kilometres of Chinese territory joining Afghanistan at heights above 20,000 feet. How did he expect the Chinese to cross over these snow covered mountains in the middle of winter with no preliminary preparations?

However what was clear by now was summed up by the well known Afghan specialist, Oliver Roy. He was quoted as saying "on the eve of the invasion Amin's government was on the verge of collapse"[29].

Another mutiny took place at Rishkur on the western outskirts of Kabul on 14 October, 1979. This time it was the officers and men of 7 Infantry Division. The mutiny was put down by jet strikes and other forces loyal to the government. Amin proved to be even more brutal than Taraki.

The seventh major insurrection of army troops in twenty months of the despotic rule of Taraki and Amin took place in the Kunar valley at the garrison town of Ammar. Surrounded by only 400 *Mujahideen*, 5 Brigade of 7 Infantry Division rose up against those who did not want to mutiny. About 150 'loyal' troops were killed. Brigadier Abdur Rauf along with the rest of the brigade joined the *Mujahideen* belonging to the Jamiat and the Hizb.

Heady with success and boosted with about 2,000 regular soldiers and another 4,000 freedom fighters they went on to their next objective - the garrison of Chugha - Serai on the Pakistani border. The 2,500 Kabul regime troops however held out. Lacking discipline the *Mujahideen* began squabbling over the arms and ammunition of 5 Brigade which they claimed should be divided amongst the victors. While the wrangling over the booty continued the Chugha - Serai garrison was reinforced and the attack by the *Mujahideen* failed.

In December, 1979 Fayzabad, capital of the northern province of Badakshan was captured and lost by the *Mujahideen*. By then, however, 18 out of the 28 provinces in Afghanistan had been affected. The Soviets admitted uprisings in 17 provinces[30]. Several areas of Afghanistan had passed into *Mujahideen* hands who were effectively administering areas under their control. They were collecting taxes, running schools and hospitals and not permitting the central agencies to enter.

With insurgency raging in most of the 28 provinces the pro-Marxist regime in Kabul was in danger of collapsing. Moscow had to act before it was too late.

Notes

1. Interview with Lieutenant General Hamid Gul, Former Director General, Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate, government of Pakistan on 9 November, 1989 at Multan. Also see Keesings Contemporary Archive volume xxvi, 30364, 18 July, 1980, for source of weapon supply.
2. Interview with Brigadier (retired), Fahimullah Khattak, Former Refugee Commissioner, Peshawar, Pakistan on 1 November, 1989 at Peshawar.
3. Data compiled by Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad, October, 1988. Also see Amin. T. Afghanistan Crisis, Institute of Policy Studies, Islamabad, 1982, p. 102.
4. Defence and Foreign Affairs Handbook, 1988, p. 9.
5. Independent, London, 19 August, 1988. Also see Mark Urban, *War in Afghanistan*, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1988, p. 17 and Sandy Gal, *Behind Russian Lines* Sidgwick and Jackson, London, 1983 p. 19. (Rosanne Klass, Sandy Gal, Anthony Hyman, Edward Girardet, Roy and Fulleston have all in their respective books accused Hikmatyar of eliminating his rivals).
6. Interview Hamid Gul on 9 November, 1989.
7. Interview with Engineer Gulbadin Hikmatyar on 16 April, 1990. Also see Afghan Jehad, January - March, 1988, p. 52.
8. Gal, S, p. 21.
9. Girardet, E. *Afghanistan - The Soviet War*, Croom Helm, New York, 1985, p. 168.
10. Interview with Maulvi Yunus Khalis on 1 November, 1989 at Peshawar.
11. Ibid.
12. Data compiled by Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad, 1988.
13. Interview with Professor Burhanuddin Rabbani on 23 May, 1990 at Islamabad.
14. Data compiled by Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad, 1988.
15. Interview with Pir Syed Ahmad Effendi Gailani on 10 February, 1990 at Islamabad.
16. Data compiled by Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad, 1988.
17. Interview with Professor Sibghatullah Mojeddidi on 31 January, 1990 at Peshawar.
18. Girardet, p. 173.
19. Interview with Professor Mojeddedi on 31 January, 1990 at Peshawar.
20. Data compiled by Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad, 1988.
21. Interview with Ibrahim Khalili in Tehran on 6 March, 1990; Also see Urban pp. 241 .... 244 and Bruce Amstutz, *Afghanistan First Five Years of Soviet Occupation*, National Defence University, Washington DC., 1986 pp. 116, 117, 118.
22. Urban, p. 30.

23. Hyman, A. *Afghanistan Under Soviet Domination*, 1964-81, Macmillan Press Ltd., London, p. 101.

24. Guardian, 31 March, 1979.

25. Urban, pp. 31, 32.

26. Amstutz, p. 46.

27. Roy, A. *Soviet Intervention in Afghanistan*, p. 20.

28. New York Times, 13 March, 1990.

29. Amstutz, p. 40.

30. New Times, Vol. 17, No. 80, April, 1980, p. 23.

3 Soviet Military Intervention

> "It is not difficult to conquer Afghanistan. It is difficult to keep it".
>
> **Amir Abdur Rahman**
> (1880 - 1901)

The Soviet 'occupation' of a defenceless country sent shockwaves throughout the world. Pakistan being closest to the epicentre felt threatened that it might be the next to face the Soviet juggernaut. China, next door, perceived the invasion as another step towards its encirclement by a rival communist power. In Washington the needle of the seismograph, which so far had not reacted to the events in Afghanistan, suddenly registered a major shake up in an area of vital interest to the United States.

By sending 80,000 Soviet troops over the Hindu Kush Brezhnev had changed the power equation in the region. Russian aircraft at Shindand, only 480 kilometre from the Gulf, had altered the geo-strategic environment in southcentral Asia overnight. Moscow's thrust across the Oxus was described by James R. Schlesinger, Defence and Energy Secretary in the Carter administration, as the "gravest peril since the darkest days of World War II"[1].

What made the Communist Party Chief take this gamble? was it a preplanned move or was the Kremlin leadership pushed into using military force? was it an offensive or defensive action by the Soviets? Different theories have been propounded to explain the reasons for the Soviet military involvement in the Afghan conflict. This chapter seeks to examine the causes and the repercussions of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

The contingency plan for direct military intervention in the ongoing Afghanistan 'civil war' between the Soviet supported Kabul regime and the freedom fighters seems to have been made several months before the actual invasion. Resistance against the radical socio-economic reforms introduced by Taraki after the Saur Revolution had commenced shortly after the coup d' etat. However Moscow did not feel the need initially, to substantially increase the strength of its military advisers and units already present in Afghanistan. They were, no doubt, carefully monitoring the situation and advising their protege in Kabul to go slow in implementing the changes, specially where they hurt the religious sentiments or the age-old tribal traditions of the Afghan people.

The Kremlin leadership was concerned about the infighting within the Khalq faction of the PDPA with Amin trying to wrest power from his one-time friend and comrade Taraki. The September shoot out brought Amin to the fore-front. It was his turn to carry forward the aims and objectives of the April '78 revolution. But the Soviets found him even more inept than Taraki and even more difficult to control. Left to Amin Kabul may have slipped out of their hand. On the military side the defections, purges and casualties among the Afghan army had brought their strength down from 100,000 in early 1978 to around 30,000 in December, 1979[2], with no new recruitment forthcoming. This forced the Soviet Union to increase its involvement in Afghanistan.

Brezhnev and his politburo hard-liners were determined to consolidate the gains of the socialist revolution in Afghanistan. To do so in the face of the growing resistance two decisions were taken: first, replacement of Amin, by a more pliable pro-Soviet leader; second, massive induction of Soviet forces in order to occupy major cities and certain other critical areas allowing the Afghan army to combat the insurgency.

The removal of Amin was not much of a problem. He could have been persuaded, coerced, or even eliminated without creating much of a stir within or outside Afghanistan. With blood flowing so freely on Kabul streets an extra head rolled in the dust would not arouse any greater antagonism than what was already present. The Western world would have also taken this as yet another indication of the on-going struggle for power in the set-up in Afghanistan.

The second decision of using Soviet forces for the first time after world war II in an Asian country, however, needed careful consideration. The advantage of geographical proximity had to be weighed against the historical aversion of the Afghans to foreign intervention. The bilateral relations between the Soviet Union and her Asian neighbours had to be taken into account as they were bound to be affected by the intrusion of Soviet troops in Afghanistan. The response of the United States to the change in the regional power balance had to be assessed. The effect on East-West de'tente and the possible stalling of the SALT II Treaty could not be ignored. The moral pressure of world public opinion expressed in the United Nations General Assembly would have to be endured and finally the danger of becoming inextricably involved in Afghanistan (like the US in Vietnam) had to be carefully examined.

To enable the Soviet leadership to come to a definite decision in line with the Brezhnev doctrine[3], which declared that once a nation became part of the Soviet bloc it could not be forsaken, a very high level Soviet delegation was sent to Kabul in August, 1979. The delegation was headed by seventy-one year old General Ivan G. Pavlosky, the First Deputy Minister of Defence and Commander-in-Chief of the Soviet armed forces. He was assisted by fifty other generals including General Alexei A. Yepishev, the Political Commissar, who had master minded the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968[4]. Ostensibly the delegation had come to assist the Afghan armed forces in improving their effectiveness. In-fact they were there to assess the military situation on the ground and to give their recommendations for the projected invasion plan.

The conclusion which this high powered delegation possibly came to was that the Soviet army would have to move in to save the tottering left wing regime and that risks of the conflict getting enlarged would be nominal. It was probably based on the following assumptions: the United States was the only country which could physically intervene, but it had not overcome the Vietnam syndrome; no one in the US Congress would think of meeting force with force in an area thousands of miles away from home; President Carter had his hands full with the hostage issue in Iran. If military action was to be carried out the first priority would be to use his crack troops to rescue the American citizens being held up in Iran; Washington was also being condemned by

the Muslim world for being involved in the take-over of the Holy *Kaaba* (Grand Mosque of Mecca) by some Muslim fanatics. The US Embassy had been recently burnt down in Islamabad in a protest demonstration against the perceived involvement of the United States in this sacrilege; Carter had done nothing when Afghanistan lost its neutral status and became part of the socialist community after the Saur Revolution.

The Marxist-oriented MPLA had won control of Angola with the help of the Cubans flown in by the Soviet Union in 1976 and Washington had to accept the fait accompli. The US had not been able to prevent the Soviet sea and airlift of 15,000 Cuban combat troops into Ethiopia in early 1978. Five thousand Cuban troops had been sent to Aden on 26 June, the same year with no serious reaction by President Carter. The Chinese had 'taught Vietnam a lesson' without USA objecting to Chinese military intervention. The US administration had even swallowed the kidnapping and eventual murder of its Ambassador in Kabul.

Moscow was indeed aware of the strong statements being made by the 'hawks' like Zbigniw Brzezenski, head of the National Security Council of the United States. On the other hand Cyril Vance and the State Department were advising against stronger action as they did not want to retard the process of de'tente in US - Soviet relations. In this he was supported by Marshal D. Shulman his adviser on Soviet affairs. The US election campaign was to begin shortly and Carter would not take any rash decisions so as not to jeopardise his chances for a second term. De'tente was dead already as USA was deploying medium range missiles in Europe and had increased its defence spending by 30 percent.

The Soviet Union was, therefore, convinced that military intervention in Afghanistan would not lead to a confrontation with the USA nor would there be a risk of a nuclear war. The worst situation would be an involvement in an undeclared war by proxy which, because of superior strategic orientation, the Soviet Union was bound to win.

So far as Iran was concerned its revolution was still shaky and except for hard hitting statements, Ayatullah Khomeni and the clergy could not pose a threat. The armed forces had been sharply denuded and the religiously motivated *'pasadaran'* had their

hands full with internal enemies and with the 'Great Satan' - the United States.

China, was not likely to get militarily involved by physically supporting the Maoist-style *Shola-e-Javed* elements. In any case these ultra leftists were not much of a force to reckon with. Presence of a large number of Soviet troops in Afghanistan would of-course be resented by Beijing but no additional pressure along the Sino-Soviet border was to be expected. They were already in confrontation with the Soviet supported Vietnamese, who had thrown out the pro-Chinese Pol Pot regime in Kampuchea. While Soviet advances into Afghanistan would be taken as another step towards closing the ring around China, the most they could do would be to provide some weapons to the 'rebels' and bolster up Pakistan's defences by giving them additional military equipment.

Pakistan's relations with many countries had soured of late (though temporarily) because of the rejection by General Zia-ul-Haq, of the appeals made by various heads of states not to hang Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, the former prime minister of Pakistan. It would, no doubt, make the greatest noise but could not divert forces to the western border because of the permanent threat from India. Even if it did so its troops would remain east of the Durand Line. Assistance would undoubtedly be given to the 'counter revolutionaries' from the Pakistan side of the border. That would make things difficult for a quick victory but not render it impossible.

India, would, probably publicly demand the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Afghanistan but would go along with Soviet objectives in that country, as it would result in an additional threat to Pakistan. In any case India had a caretaker government at that time which would not be critical of Moscow's decisions. The response from the rest of the world would be inconsequential.

This must have been the overall assessment and so the go ahead was given to Marshal Sergei Sukolov, First Deputy Minister of Defence, to execute what might be termed as 'Operation Rescue' from the Russian point of view. The decision to send troops into Afghanistan was taken by four top officials of the Soviet Union viz: The President of USSR, Leonid I. Brezhnev; the Foreign Minister, Andrei Gromyko; Defence Minister Dmitri F. Ustinov and the KGB Chairman and politburo member Yuri Andropov. Those in the Politburo who opposed the military

intervention were N.V. Ogarkov, S.V. Akhromev and V.I. Verrinakov. But they could not overrule the Defence Minister. The decision was in violation of the Soviet Constitution (Article 73. VIII) because neither the Supreme Soviet nor the Presiding Committee of the Supreme Soviet ever discussed sending troops to Afghanistan. The Politburo of the Central Committee of the CPSU never had a meeting to discuss the matter[5]. The decision was kept a secret as is evident from a statement by Alexander Agentov, Brezhnev's foreign policy assistant responsible for Afghanistan affairs. Agentov is reported to have enquired from Brezhnev "what reply should be sent to Amin asking us to send troops". Brezhnev replied "What Amin: It is now Babrak Karmal in Kabul and now our troops are already there"[6]. Agentov had obviously not been kept informed about the proposed induction of Russian troops into Afghanistan.

Another version on how and when the decision to intervene militarily in Afghanistan was taken by the Soviet leadership was given by a well informed Soviet scholar. According to him consideration of the proposal to send Soviet forces in aid of the revolution in Afghanistan began in the autumn of 1979. Foreign Minister Gromyko, Defence Minister Ustinov and Party Ideologue Suslov favoured the despatch of Soviet troops. Another Politburo Member, Andropov, was also favourably inclined. However, no decision was made in the politburo. On 24 December, 1979 Gromyko convened a meeting in the Kremlin to consider the question of sending Soviet troops. It was attended by Ustinov, Suslov, Andropov and several experts on Afghanistan. After about 45 minutes, Brezhnev entered the room, embraced all participants kissing each one on the cheeks. As he sat at the table, Gromyko whispered audibly to Brezhnev and gave details as to how Hafizullah Amin had organized the murder of President Taraki. No discussion took place. Brezhnev stood up and banging his fists on the table said words to the effect "that dirty murderer must be liquidated". He then walked out[7]. The authorisation for the Soviet military intervention had been given. Leonid B. Teplinsky, Minister extra-ordinary and plenipotentiary and Doctor of Historical Sciences maintained that no official order for the invasion exists. All orders were made orally[8].

It has also been widely reported that the hardliners forced Brezhnev to accept their advice of sending troops into Afghanistan or resign[9]. The official statement that the decision was made by

the 'Gang of Four' and that the proposal for sending troops into Afghanistan was neither discussed by the Politburo nor in the Central Committee seems to be correct. Whatever the facts there is no doubt that the Soviet people were kept in the dark with regards to the real objectives of the limited Soviet military contingent. Edward Shevardnadze, Foreign Minister of the Soviet Union summed it up by saying "We used to call it an international duty but it would be more correct to call it an invasion"[10], an interesting story in the New Times also reflects the feelings of the Moscovites in this regard. A disabled Soviet soldier, who had seen action in Afghanistan tried, to jump a queue. He was told by an angry lady to get back in line. The ex-soldier pointed out to his disability which he suffered in Afghanistan. The lady curtly replied "we did not send you there"[11].

Preliminary Moves

The preliminary moves for this plan began even before a firm decision was taken. The signing of the Treaty of Friendship, Good Neighbourliness and Cooperation with the Taraki government on 5 December, 1978 had ensured that the entry of Soviet troops inside Afghanistan, whenever necessary, would have a 'legal' cover. Article Four of the Agreement stated "The high contracting parties shall consult each other and take by agreement appropriate measures to ensure the security, independence and territorial integrity of the two countries"[12]. (Indira Gandhi had signed a similar treaty with Brezhnev in August, 1971 before invading East Pakistan). In the case of India it was to keep China out of the area. In the case of Afghanistan it was to have a ready justification for the intended military intervention.

By early 1979, seven hundred Soviet military advisers descended on Kabul and fanned out to take up positions in the Afghan armed forces down to company level (The Institute of Oriental Studies. Moscow did not agree that Soviet military personnel were in such large numbers to go down to each company)[13]. By August the number of Soviet advisers (both military and civilian) was more than 5,000[14]. The US Ambassador in Kabul Arthur Watson, estimated an additional 1,500 Soviet troops in Afghanistan before the invasion[15].

The press and electronic media in USSR began to project the involvement of USA, China, Pakistan and Iran in the activities of the so-called counter revolutionaries thus building up a case for

fulfilling their self styled international duty of supporting a socialist regime in Afghanistan. The Soviets were making loud noises about attacks on the sovereignty of Afghanistan. They blamed Pakistan for sending armed gangs across its border. Pravda warned that an attempt was being made to create a crisis in the region and that the USSR could not 'remain indifferent to a conflict near its frontier'[16].

Lieutenant General Victor S. Paputin, First Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs, was sent to Kabul on 3 December, 1979 to persuade Amin to hand over powers. He however failed to do so and was shot at on 19 December, in an argument with Asadullah Amin, nephew of Hafeezullah Amin[17]. Paputin was probably flown back to Moscow where he is reported to have died. Soviet sources however, say he died on 29 December, 1979 while in Kabul and perhaps committed suicide[18]. Another version is that Paputin asked Amin to step down on 28 December. When he refused to do so Paputin commited suicide by shooting himself[19]. None of the stories could be verified from authentic sources but what appears to be correct is that Paputin was sent to Kabul to ask Amin to step aside and let Karmal take over. A task which he failed to accomplish. He thus met his fate so common in totalitarian societies.

Command and Control

The peace-time control of military units in southern USSR is exercised by the three Military District Headquarters: Turkestan Military District; Central Asian Military District and Trans Caucuses Military District. Each of these Military Districts[20] has a varied number of army formations which are at different stages of combat readiness. Combat ready status 1 means that the formation or unit has its full complements of arms, ammunition and personnel and can take the field at very short notice (only front line divisions in Eastern Europe maintained such an operational readiness). Combat ready status 2 and 3 have abut 50 to 30 percent of their strength present respectively and need time for mobilisation[21]. Recalling of reservists can be done covertly but it is highly unlikely that such an operation can go unnoticed. Western observers of Soviet military activities should have come to know about these preliminary moves prior to the Soviet intervention in December, 1979 as none of the formations taking

part were in combat ready status 1 and a certain measure of mobilisation was necessary.

The main Headquarters of all ground forces for the assault was in Tashkent. First Deputy Defence Minister, Marshal Sergei Sokolov, formed a Southern Theatre of Military Operations with its HQ at Termez, Army General Vallentin Varenniko was appointed as his Chief of Staff. The Southern Theater had two Fronts (army group) under its command. The first one was located in Turkestan Military District under the command of Colonel General Yuri Maksimov, and the other was in the Central Asian District under Colonel General Pyotr Lushev. 40th Army HQ, commanded by Lieutenant General V Michailov, was also located in Termez[22].

Assembly of Forces

In September, 1979 full mobilisation of forces in Central Asia was ordered. The combat status of two divisions stationed there was raised. More Soviet military advisers began to arrive in Kabul and the figure rose to 4,000 by November[23] from 700 in June the same year. Soviet troops from the 105 Guards "Airborne Division flew in from Farghana. Bagram air base was strengthened by another three infantry battalions and an armoured unit. Between 11 to 15 December transport planes concentrated in the Central Asian region. tactical fighter aircraft shifted from bases deep inside the Soviet Union to those close to the border. Another two airborne divisions, 103 in Beloyrussia and 104 in Azerbeijan, part of the elite strike force, were placed on alert. On 17 December Soviet troops moved out from Bagram to secure the highway at Salang pass, the route along which one of the pincer movements was to be carried out when the invasion came a week later. Early on 24 December a brigade from 105 Air Assault Division, trained on the lines of the SAS (Special Air Service Group) in Britain, took over control of key points in Kabul[24].

These major moves could not be kept a secret. US intelligence was fully aware of the troop movements and kept the Pentagon and State Department informed. Based on reports received, the State Department briefed reporters on the Soviet military build up on 22 December. A Pakistani diplomat is believed to have warned the Americans about the impending invasion three weeks before it actually came[25]. In May, 1979 the Defence Intelligence Agency of USA had also assessed that there was a high probability

that the Soviets would invade Afghanistan[26]. However a few months before the invasion an important American editor thought otherwise. He is quoted as saying "the Soviets are not going to invade Afghanistan. Afghanistan is of absolutely no importance to anyone. The Soviets do not want it and if they do they can have it, nobody cares"[27]. US response to these moves was unduly soft. No warning was given to the Soviet Union. Washington spelt out no measures that it would take in retaliation if the Russians intervened militarily in the internal affairs of Afghanistan. Carter had perhaps the same attitude towards the internal Afghan conflict, before the Soviets moved in, as Eisenhower had after Korea. Ike is reported to have said then "Let it be Asians against Asians"[28].

When Zbigniew Brzezinski, the adviser on national security in the Carter administration visited Pakistan in January, 1980, the author briefed the US delegation on the situation in Afghanistan. Satellite photographs of Soviet units along the Russo-Afghan border taken on successive days were also displayed by US officers which clearly showed the progressive build up of Soviet forces north of the Amu Darya. The Soviet invasion should not, therefore, have come as a surprise to the United States. It is another matter that Carter chose not to take a serious note of the information provided to him by his intelligence agencies.

To Brezhnev the picture looked quite different from that which the Americans faced in Vietnam. Unlike President John F. Kennedy in 1960 he had launched his troops in a territory contiguous to the Soviet Union and hence faced no problem for resupply and reinforcement if need be. The opposition to the Kabul regime was not as united as it was in Vietnam against US imperialism. Although both the Vietcong and the *Mujahideen* were thoroughly motivated and willing to give the maximum sacrifice to throw back the aggressor the Afghan 'rebels' were not well organised as a fighting force. Even the terrain was different. Searching out and destroying guerrillas in the thick jungles of Vietnam was more difficult than doing the same in the barren mountains of the Hindu Kush. Besides Brezhnev did not have to fear criticism at home for failure abroad as public opinion is a meaningless concept in a closed society. The American President on the other hand had to face the Congress and the American people. Pakistan, unlike North Vietnam, was not expected to send its forces into Afghanistan in support of the 'rebels'. He must have

recalled the cases with which his predecessors had quelled anti-communist insurrections in East Germany in 1953 and in Hungary in 1956. He himself had crushed the revolt in Czechoslovakia in 1968. If the Soviets could do it before then they could do so again.

With all this in their favour no wonder the Kremlin leadership had no hesitation in taking the fateful decision to move into Afghanistan.

Probable Aim

To preserve the PDPA government without getting too greatly involved militarily and to replace Amin by Babrak Karmal.

Military Objectives

Possible military objectives were: to protect the capital against 'counter-revolutionaries'; secure main military bases against raids by the rebels; ensure safety of main lines of communication specially the Salang highway; defend main economic centres and to hold off the 'extremists' till the Afghan army was reorganised, reequipped and capable of defending itself[29].

Plan of Attack

Phase I

Securing of air fields at Bagram and Kabul by advance units sent into Afghanistan three months earlier ostensibly to help Amin's regime in suppressing the insurgency.

Phase II

One regiment (brigade) each from 103 and 104 Air Assault Division[30] ex Beyloyrussia and Azerbeijan respectively and 105 Air Assault Division complete to be airlifted to Kabul. They were to fan out to control key points in the city. These were the elite divisions, best equipped, best trained and reportedly best paid as well. All ranks were regular soldiers with no conscripts. All were members of the Communist Party of KOMSOMOL. All were European Russians and not mixed with other ethnic groups. One hundred and fifty military transport planes, (Illushin-28, and Antonov-12) were to be used for this airlift[31].

Phase III

Two separate ground forces comprising two motorised infantry

divisions each, supported by armour and provided with aircover to advance, in a major pincer movement, towards Kabul.

Avenues of Approach[32]

Right Two motorised rifle divisions to move along axis Kushka - Herat - Qandahar.

Left Two motorised rifle divisions to move along axis Kunduz - Mazar-e-Sharif - Kabul.

Softening Up

Soviet military advisers, who were already present down to company level, were to make the Afghan army units ineffective on some excuse or another. Afghan army tanks were to be put under overhaul. Batteries were to be removed for preservation, ammunition to be locked up, Afghan officers were to be invited to a reception and not permitted to leave on D Day[33].

Details of Operations and The Sequence of Events

24 Dec. '79 (11 p.m.)

Major Soviet forces begin landing at Kabul, Bagram and Shindand Air Bases. These Soviet airborne forces consisted of one regiment (brigade) from each of the 103 and 104 Guards Air Assault Division and the whole of 105 Division. Initially totalling 5,000 men[34].

25 Dec. 4 a.m.

Kabul airport secured in five hours. Disembarking of Soviet troops at Kabul Airport continues. Sub units of 105 Air Assault Division arrive in Kabul.

Later in the day

Two hundred flights bring in 10,000 Soviet troops into Afghanistan[35].

26 Dec.

Two Soviet motor rifle divisions, 357 and 66 (each of 12,500 men) cross the Russo - Afghan border at Kushka and move towards Qandahar via the Herat - Qandahar - highway (Remaining elements of 105 Airborne Division continue to arrive at Kabul Airport[36].

Simultaneously another two motor rifle divisions, 360 and 201 cross the Amu Darya at Termez and head for the capital along the Kunduz - Mazar-e-Sharif -Kabul route[37]. Air cover was provided to these four divisions by MiG-23s operating from Karshi and MiG-21s from Kerki Air Fields in the USSR.

27 Dec. 2.30 p.m.

Soviet Minister of Communication, in Kabul pays a courtesy call on President Amin and says that 'everything is normal'. Amin at this stage was either unaware of the entry of Soviet forces or helpless - more likely the latter.

Afternoon

Units of 105 Air Borne Division move out of their Assembly Areas at Bagram and Kabul Airport and occupy strategic points in Kabul.

7.15 p.m.

Soviet special forces (spetsnaz) 'capture' the Headquarters of the internal police Communication Centre and other key points.

7.30 p.m.

An explosion knocks out Kabul's telephone system.

8.45 p.m.

Termez broadcasts Karmal's tape-recorded speech announcing the take over. The message was sent out on Kabul Radio's frequency to make it appear that Babrak Karmal was speaking on radio Kabul from the capital. The real radio Kabul continues normal transmission for atleast one and a half hour after the fake radio in Soviet territory made the announcement"[38].

10.30 p.m.

Radio station captured. The two hours overlapping broadcasts from Termez pretending to be radio Kabul and the programme from the genuine radio Kabul gave away the cover story.

Midnight

Two battalions of 105 Soviet Division with ASU-85[39] (tracked artillery guns) assault the Darulaman Palace (the Ministry of Defence). Tajbeg Palace, within the Darulaman complex where Amin was staying, is assaulted by Soviet troops. Amin and his

family are killed by specially trained KGB assault units[40] purported to be dressed in Afghan army uniforms. Resistance continues until early morning of 28 December.

28 Dec.

Babrak Karmal flown into Kabul from Eastern Europe[41]. A Soviet scholar at the Institute of Oriental Studies Moscow told the author that Karmal was in Tashkent. David C. Isby, who has spent much of his time with the Afghan *Mujahideen*, also mentions that Karmal was flown in from Tashkent. Karmal however claimed that he entered Afghanistan secretly in October, 1979 which even members of the Institute of Oriental Studies, Moscow are not prepared to believe.

12.15 a.m.

Babrak Karmal announcing the take over on Afghan television says "Afghanistan had been subjected to intolerable violence and torture by the bloody apparatus of Hafizullah Amin. The chain of imperialism, facisim and dictatorship. In the heart of Asia, has been broken"[42].

2.40 a.m.

Karmal is declared President of the Revolutionary Council, Prime Minister of Afghanistan, Secretary General of the PDPA and Commander of the armed forces[43].

3.15 a.m.

Kabul Radio announces that Amin was executed after a Revolutionary court sentenced him to death for crimes against the Afghan people[44].

31 Dec.

Soviet forces occupy all major towns, airfields and critical points on the main highways.

1 Jan. '80

Fighting between Afghan troops and Soviet forces continues in Kabul and other Afghan cities.

Russians continue to fly in supplies and reinforcements, 22 to 24 flights daily being reported.

At least one motorised infantry division in Soviet Central Asia

and another in Turkestan being mobilised.

Karmal Takes Over

The new ruler in Kabul heaped invectives on the ousted leader and blamed him for all the ills of society. Till the day before Amin was a great leader appearing every day on the front page of the Kabul Times. On 1 January he became a 'murderer', "a treacherous foe of God and honesty", an "American lackey. One who deserved execution because of the crimes he had committed against the noble people of Afghanistan[45]. For the next week or so the Kabul New Times continued to splash news items and photographs of hundreds of Afghan, men, women and children who were released by the new regime from Pul-e-Charkhi jail, where they had been tortured by Hafizullah Amin.

The targets for condemnation, in addition to Amin, were the United States, Saudi Arabia and China, surprisingly Pakistan was not much in the news. The report by Karmal to the Politburo on 18 January, 1980 spoke of US imperialism and Chinese hegemonism in cooperation with Sadat of Egypt, who had converted Pakistan into an imperialist arsenal, spurning the interests of the peace loving Muslim and honourable people of Pakistan"[46]. No mention was made of General Zia-ul-Haq.

Within a few days of taking over the familiar communist terminologies again began to appear - politburo, central committee, presidium of the revolutionary council, members and alternate members etc. The colour, form and emblem of the Afghan flag was also changed to include the ever present symbol of Soviet communism - the red star. Not to appear an 'atheist', however, Karmal always began his speeches with *Bismillah-ir-Rahman-ir-Raheem* (In the name of Allah, the most Benevolent, the most Merciful)[47]. The purpose of the Soviet military intervention being to replace Amin with a more pliable Afghan leadership the civilians were given a major share in the Central Committee of the PDPA. Only 7 out of the 36 members were from the army[48].

A total of 200 to 250 Soviet soldiers are reported to have been killed or wounded between 27 December to 1 January[49]. US reports claim that 900 to 1,200 Russian soldiers were killed or wounded[50]. The latter appears to be an exaggerated figure.

Causes of The Invasion

Not for the first time had a superpower invaded a defenceless country to advance its national interests. The Americans, in the recent past, had done so several times and so had the Soviet Union. But the invasion of Afghanistan by the Russians caused considerable consternation, both in the immediate neighbourhood as well as in states far away because it was not clear where the new ideological frontier was going to rest-on the Khyber or on the Arabian Sea? Was the move southwards offensive or defensive in nature? What were the short term goals and long term objectives of the Kremlin leadership?

The Foreign Ministries in world capitals, particularly in Islamabad, Tehran, Washington and Beijing were humming with activity on that Christmas eve trying to assess what Brezhnev and the rest of the Politburo were upto. Views ranged from another step towards international communism to merely a helping hand to a socialist regime. The Tsarist dream of warm water ports was revived; a threat to the free flow of oil became obvious to some; Islam is in danger cried the conservative Muslim States; it is an application of the Brezhnev doctrine said the Sovietologists; a pincer movement to encircle China was the thinking in Beijing. for Imam Khomeini another *Shaitan-e-Buzurg* (Great Satan) had appeared on the horizon.

The Warm Water Theory

It is true that the Tsars of Russia had their eyes on the warm water ports in the South[51]. It is also an undeniable fact that they pushed the Russian frontiers gradually and steadily southwards in the eighteenth century. By 1880 the Russians had advanced to the Afghan border having absorbed the Central Asian Khanates of Khiva, Samarkand and Bokhara[52]. But those were the days of empire-building. British, Portuguese and the Dutch, Spain, Germany and Italy were all on the move. Occupation of somebody else's territory was considered fair game and colonising 'barbaric' people a Christian virtue The scenario had, however, changed since the days of the Tsars.

The Soviets, had enough facilities around the Indian Ocean which enabled them to maintain an adequate number of ships in these waters. Ethiopia and South Yemen in the west and Kam Rahn Bay in the east provided them the warm water ports their

predecessors dreamt of. Sophisticated high technology had reduced the dependence on far flung bases because of the long reach of nuclear and conventional weapons. This historical compulsion of the Russians was, therefore, no longer valid.

The Oil Theory

Kenneth L Alderman, senior political scientist at the Strategic Studies Centre of the Swedish Research Institute, thought the move was a 'lunge' for oil. He was supported by some other western writers. The occupation of the Shindand air field did bring the Soviets to within 480 kilometres of the Straits of Hormuz - only 15 minutes flying time for a modern fighter aircraft but the oil lanes could even be attacked from Transcaucasia, close to the borders of Turkey, Ethiopia and South Yemen. USSR was producing 12 million barrels of oil per day[53]. It also had 150 billion barrels of oil reserves, the largest in the world[54], and there was no immediate danger that the Soviet Union would be forced to become a net importer of oil in the near future.

In an interview with Pravda, Brezhnev shrugged away the motive for the control of the Persian Gulf oil by saying "It is the colonialists who are attracted by the smell of oil"[55]. A serious attempt to advance towards the oil life-line of the West would have meant an all out war with the United States which could have ended up in a nuclear confrontation. Not even hard liner Brezhnev would take such a risk[56]. The Nazi/Soviet talks in 1940 did refer to 'Soviet interests' in the direction of the Persian Gulf. Forty years later the co-relation of forces had changed to such an extent that a physical capture of an area so vital to the United States and other western nations would have resulted in an open conflict between the two superpowers which the Russians could ill-afford.

Interdiction of the oil supply to the West in case of an all out war was certainly a possibility but that capability already existed and it is doubtful if Soviet troops went into Afghanistan mainly for this purpose.

The Pincer Theory

Inspite of these risks, which the Kremlin would have to take the conservative Heritage Foundation in the United States still gave credence to the so called 'giant' pincer movement designed to encircle the Persian oil fields. The other end of the pincer being

Ethiopia and South Yemen[57]. With so many independent states in between and with US vital interests at stake an attempt like this would certainly have resulted in an all out war between the two superpowers which would not have been restricted to conventional weapons only.

The Spring Board Theory

With Afghanistan becoming a Soviet satellite Moscow would have achieved a base from where it could advance further in any direction it chose or be in a better position to support a secessionist movement in Pakistan's Baluchistan province. With Soviet troops along the Durand Line it would be possible to carry out hot pursuit of the anti-revolutionary elements operating from across the border. This indeed was in the realm of possibility but I would not agree with the US Defence Intelligence Agency's assessment that the 'Soviet eyes were now fixed on Gwadar[58]' - a Pakistani fishing village on the Makran coast (Arabian Sea). To advance beyond Afghanistan without first consolidating its position in that country would have been disastrous more so because any further move southward would have almost certainly brought in the United States in the conflict.

Expansionist Theory

Prince Alexander Gorchakov, Foreign Minister of Tsar Alexander II (1850-1870) is reported to have said "need for secure frontiers dictated further southward expansion"[59]. Again it was Leon Trotsky who said "The road to Paris and London leads through Afghanistan"[60]. The Russians did expand their territories in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. They did so again during World War II and only reluctantly withdrew from areas occupied at that time. They continued to display such a tendency in the fifties and sixties.

Adam B. Ullam, the Harvard historian of Soviet foreign policy, believes that since the world communist movement has been 'irretrievably lost and the doctrine itself has become discredited the regime strives to demonstrate its vitality and viability through expansion'. This according to him means 'seizing upon targets of opportunity to extend the Soviet reach as a global power'[61]. It is doubtful, however if expansionism was the primary aim of the Soviet Politburo in December, 1979. The Soviets employed twenty divisions (250,000 troops) to establish themselves in

Czechoslovakia in 1968. In Afghanistan they sent only six divisions. The strength of the forces employed goes against the expansionist theory. Joseph C. Hard made a very correct assessment in February, 1980 when he said "If at all there was a plan to go further south, the Soviets after two months were thinking of not where to go next but how to get out and go home without losing face"[62].

The Alarmist Theory

Jack Anderson, the columnist of the Washington Post, sounded alarm bells in at least three capitals when he came out with his preposterous theory of 'the grand strategy in South Asia'. According to him this implied the "dismemberment of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan into separate ethnic states. Then, he went on to say, 'the Soviets will pick up the pieces and absorb them one by one into the Soviet Union"[63]. A CIA analyst painted a scenario equally hyperbolic when he wrote that "the Soviets would use the Afghans, Pathans and the Baluchis as proxy forces to form a surrogate army, thus avoiding the use of Soviet troops and a major confrontation with USA"[64]. Both of these assessments were prejudiced and without any basis.

Pre-emption Theory

Narsimah Rao, the then foreign minister of India, told a leading Indian journalist, during his visit to Moscow in April, 1980 that the "Russians had gone into Afghanistan to pre-empt the Americans"[65]. Mascrenhas, the editor of the Times of India, elaborated this further by saying that the Soviets needed a 'logistic base' to operate against the Americans. Such a theory holds no water as it is highly unlikely that Brezhnev was planning on a direct military confrontation with his rival superpower for which he was certainly not prepared. Moscow did sign a Treaty in 1921 with Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan. Article VI of the Treaty with Iran gave the right to Moscow to intervene if Iran is occupied by a third party or was used as a base for anti-Soviet activities. Washington had been containing communism in Southwest Asia and had adopted a 'forward policy' in this region. US had placed monitoring devices in Iran to monitor Soviet activities. Badaber in Peshawar had been used as a US Spy plane base by the Americans against the Soviets. President Carter was making preparations to rescue the American hostages, held by Ayatullah Khomeni by a military action. This could have made the Russians feel uneasy as

it could result in USA re-establishing itself in Iran but the Americans were certainly not planning to move into Afghanistan.

Islamic Revivalism Theory

There is no doubt that after the Islamic Revolution in Iran and the process of Islamisation being introduced in Pakistan under General Zia-ul-Haq, the communists were worried that if Afghanistan goes under the control of the so-called Islamic fundamentalists there could be a re-awakening of religious feelings. Possibility of unrest in the Muslim Republics along the Soviet-Afghan border was also their concern. They had to prevent a spill over of Islamic revivalism across the Oxus and hence the need, of maintaining a pro-Marxist government in Afghanistan. Helmut Sonnenfeldt, a ranking Soviet specialist and a close associate of former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, also felt that the Soviets would not tolerate a hostile Islamic government in Kabul. The same view was expressed by Marshal D. Schulman, adviser to US Secretary of State on Soviet affairs. He believed that the purpose of the Soviet attack was to avoid the creation of a crescent of militant anti-Soviet nations on its southern border and not to gain access to the Arabian Sea[66]. There is much truth in his assessment as Moscow along with several other Western nations were watching Islamic resurgence with concern. Kremlin was not so much in search of a warm water port or control over the Iranian oil fields but was mainly motivated by its determination to prevent the overthrow of a Kabul communist regime by Islamic radicals on the Iranian model.

Simplistic Theory

A western columnist put it very simply when he wrote "Russians grabbed some handy real estate while the world looked the other way"[67]. Luckily it is not that easy to occupy someone else's territory and get away with it in this post-colonial era.

Brezhnev Doctrine

Ever since the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 which placed the Marxist-Leninist in power in the Soviet Union a policy of international communism was followed by the leaders in Kremlin. The so-called 'Free World' joined hands with America to contain the Red Tide and wherever possible make it flow in the reverse direction. Hungary and Czechoslovakia which had turned communists tried to over throw the Russian 'yoke' but they were

brutally crushed by Soviet forces. Attempts by the Western nations, particularly, USA, not to let any more dominoes to fall led Brezhnev to announce his doctrine of the irreversibility of the communist ideology.

The Brezhnev doctrine, annunciated in 1968 after the Soviet 'invasion' of Czechoslovakia stated that once a country becomes socialist it was no longer the concern of that country alone to stay socialist. It was the duty of all socialist nations to ensure that it does not leave the socialist fraternity even if it meant the use of force. Communism in Afghanistan was, in December, 1979, on the verge of collapse. The *Mujahideen* were very close to their objective of overthrowing the pro-Marxist regime in Kabul. There were reports that Amin was prepared to expel the Soviet advisers in Afghanistan[68]. Though there is no evidence to suggest that Amin, like Sadat of Egypt would throw out the Russians, he was following in the footsteps of Tito of Yugoslavia. Amin was moving away from Moscow and Afghanistan was slipping out of the Soviet orbit. The invasion by the Soviets was therefore for the Russian leadership an 'international duty'.

Miscalculation Theory

Brezhnev was led to believe by his army marshals that the whole operation would be over in a few days and a pro-Soviet regime would be firmly placed in Kabul without much loss of blood[69], as happened in Budapest (1956) and in Prague (1968). The Russian soldiers would be back with their families to celebrate the coming of spring after a long cold winter. It was because of this wrong assessment that Brezhnev approved the induction of the 'limited' Soviet military contingent - which a successor was to term a 'mistake' and a 'bleeding wound'. Austrian Chancellor Bruno Kriesky feels that 'it was an absence of strong political leadership in the Kremlin[70]' suggesting thereby that perhaps the military was able to prevail over the civilians which though possible in the Soviet Union was perhaps not true in this case. A senior official of the Pakistan Embassy in Kabul at the time of the invasion agrees that the decision to invade was made by the Politburo without any military pressure.

Invitation Theory

According to Pravda "The Central Committee of the PDPA and the DRA (Democratic Republic of Afghanistan) made an insistent

request to the Soviet Union and they decided to grant the request"[71]. French communist leader Manchaiz is reported to have been told by Brezhnev that Moscow had received as many as nineteen requests for military help since the April, 1978 revolution. The requests were indeed made but were for military equipment which was sent by the Soviets along with the experts. No evidence is available to show that Taraki or Amin invited the Soviets to send Soviet troops to assist them in dealing with the insurgency. That some Russian units did come and occupy positions at Bagram air base was either without Amin's knowledge or against his wishes. Amin addressing a press conference on 12 May, 1979 said "The question of asking Soviet soldiers to come to Afghanistan and fight along our side has not been raised because we have not felt the need. If need be, talks will be held in this regard but this question has not been discussed so far"[72]. This was reiterated by him and his Foreign Minister Shah Wali several times in mid December.

There is, however, evidence to suggest that Soviets were requested to assist the Afghan army in quelling insurrections earlier on. The government of Afghanistan is reported to have requested the Soviets to assist in suppressing the mutiny in Herat in March, 1979 and in Ghazni in September the same year[73].

The claim that Moscow sent its forces into Afghanistan at the request of the Kabul government was accepted only by India and by the Soviet satellites. No one else accepted this reasoning. Amin could not have signed his own death warrant. Babrak Karmal who is supposed to have invited the Russians was not in Kabul and even if he was he had not assumed power till 28 December. His invitation if any would be meaningless. Pakistan's Ambassador to Kabul, who was the last envoy to see Hafizullah Amin is certain that Amin did not invite the Russian troops. "I have no doubt in my mind that Hafizullah did not invite his executioners" said Altaf A. Sheikh[74].

In any case intervention by invitation cannot always be accepted as a legal authority to send troops into another country as the invitation is normally extended either under pressure or by a protege of the intruding state. When the well known Indian journalist Kuldip Nayar asked Karmal about the reason for the entry of Soviet troops into Afghanistan, he replied "It is the same as you went into Bangladesh[75].

Intervention Theory

Major world powers see nothing wrong in intervening in the internal affairs of other countries. They believe in Lord Brougham's theory which states that "whenever a sudden and great change takes place in the structure of a state, dangerous in a high degree to all neighbours, they have a right to attempt, by hostile interference, the restoration of an order of things safe to themselves, or atleast, to counter balance by active aggression, the new force suddenly accquired"[76]. The US had done so in Grenada, Nicaragua, and Panama; USSR in East Germany, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Afghanistan and India in East Pakistan.

The fact that these same countries voted in favour of a UN resolution[77] stating that no state shall interfere in the civil strife in another state highlights the fact that little or no value is attached to such commitments when it is a question of acting in self interest.

The Official Soviet View

Soviet delegate to the United Nations, Oleg Troyanvosky, stated on 11 January, 1980 that his country had moved its forces into Afghanistan to repel armed intervention from outside[78]. Statement of the Foreign Relations Committee of the Supreme Soviet of USSR gave the following reasons for the military intervention: (1) fear of USA gaining a position of influence in Afghanistan after the fall of the Shah of Iran; (2) to strengthen USSR's security along its southern borders; (3) to prevent 'rebels' from overthrowing the PDPA regime; (4) to accede to a request made by the Afghan regime and (5) to support a pro-Marxist government. Mr. Andrei Gromyko, Soviet Foreign Minister speaking at the United Nations on 23 September, 1980 justifying his country's massive military intervention. said: "Temporary introduction of a limited Soviet contingent into Afghanistan was a move made in order to render assistance to the Afghan people, in repelling armed incursion into its territory from outside[79] and also to prevent the emergence of a direct threat to the security of the USSR on its southern border. The Soviets also claimed that it was in response to appeal by the government of Afghanistan and in full accord with the Soviet - Afghan treaty of 1978 and the UN Charter"[80].

This statement of the Foreign Relations Committee of the

Soviet Union is based on truth, half truth and deliberate lies. The truth in the statement is that it was indeed a limited contingent, 80,000, compared to the 500,000 US troops in Vietnam in the sixties. The half truth was that it was sent to assist a neighbour - but contrary to what Mr. Gromyko said it was to assist the tottering communist system and to unseat a ruler whose regime they had recognized. It was certainly not to assist the Afghan people. The majority of whom were against Soviet interference. Valery Giscard D' Estang, the President of France, made a cryptic remark when he said "If the intervention was due to outside interference Soviet troops must confine themselves to guarding Afghanistan's borders and not operate inside Afghanistan against guerrillas"[81]. There was no direct threat to the security of the USSR's southern border. CENTO had been dissolved. America had no troops in Iran or Pakistan leave alone Afghanistan. Its Southern neighbour was too weak to attempt a crossing of the Oxus. Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Krighizia are modern industrialised states and would not like to join a backward Afghanistan.

The deliberate lie was about the so called repeated appeals. As pointed out earlier Hafizullah Amin, who was the legal head of the Afghan government made no such request. Karmal had no authority to do so as he had no locus standii even if he was in Kabul before the entry of Soviet forces as he claimed after taking over.

However to give the Soviets their due their war planes did help Amin to recapture Fayzabad in the province of Badakshan after it was taken by the *Mujahideen* in early December, 1979. Soviet troops had moved into Afghanistan while Amin was still the head of the state. It could also be true that he asked for assistance to put down some local insurgency, at one time or another, as mentioned earlier, which he denies. But there is absolutely no evidence in any literature available on the subject to prove that Amin asked for the 'limited Soviet military contingent' in late December, 1979 in response to which the Soviets carried out their naked aggression.

As regards Article 51 of the UN Charter, to which reference has also been made, it does recognise the right to individual and collective defence, permits military aid to another state. The Charter however sets strict limits to such action and requires that

non-military methods be used to the utmost before such military action is undertaken. Also Article 51 is only invoked if an armed attack occurs against a member of the United Nations. Afghanistan had not been attacked. Even if that was perceived to be so Article 51 requires that the action be immediately reported to the United Nations which was not done in this case.

After an examination of all the possible reasons for the Soviet invasion it will be fair to assume that the Soviet objectives were limited. They had sent their troops to support a pro-Marxist regime in Kabul in order to prevent its fall to conservative Islamic groups and to replace its chief executive by a more pliable and acceptable individual.

The military targets were achieved as major cities were soon in 'pro Soviet hands' but the political objective of preserving the gains of the Saur Revolution was not. With the passage of time the Soviet Union got involved deeper and deeper in the quagmire and finally it was forced to withdraw.

Response

The United States, which had accepted a pro-Marxist government in Kabul now condemned most vehemently the Soviet military involvement in Afghanistan. The official statement by the US Department of State called the Soviet invasion "a blatant military intervention into the internal affairs of an independent state[82]. It warned Moscow that the intervention will have serious implications for US-Soviet relations"[83]. President Jimmy Carter considered the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan as "the greatest threat to peace since World War II"[84]. He told Brezhnev, on the hot line, to withdraw his forces from Afghanistan or face serious consequences[85].

He spelt out certain specific actions which the United States would be taking in response to the blatant Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. These were: (1) 17 million metric tons of US grain ordered by the Soviet Union will not be delivered; (2) restrictions will be placed on future credits to Moscow; (3) boycotting of the 1980 World Olympics to be held in Moscow, by the US contingent; (4) cut of sales of high technology computers and oil drilling equipment; (5) cut back in Soviet flights to USA; (6) provision of aid to the insurgents; (7) recalling of the American charge d' affaires in Kabul for consultation; (8) halt work on new Russian

consulates at New York; (9) 17 Soviet diplomats to be asked to leave the country; (10) curtailment of Soviet fishing rights in Alaskan waters; (11) despatching of three coast guard cutters to Alaskan waters to ensure implementation of the restrictions placed on Soviet fishing vessels; (12) increasing US presence in the Indian Ocean; (13) consider the use of facilities being offered by Somalia, Kenya and Oman; (14) provide military and economic assistance to Pakistan; (15) negotiations on the finalisation of the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty postponed; (16) establishing closer relations with China and finally (17) condemnation of the Soviet Union for its direct military involvement in a purely indigenous uprising in Afghanistan against a Soviet supported unpopular regime at Kabul[86]. Many of these measures were of no great significance. Some were symbolic. Only a few were finally implemented.

None of these restrictions and verbal statements of anger could force the Soviet Union to withdraw from Afghanistan or to give up their aim of preserving a regime in Kabul which would not only be socialist-oriented but would also be helpful to Soviet interests.

Within the US administration there were doves and hawks. Cyrus Vance, urged a certain amount of caution and even suggested a compromise. Brzezenski on the other hand, recommended a more direct response in helping Pakistan militarily. He warned that if Moscow was not checked Tehran could be the next target. According to him there was no immediate danger to Pakistan because the home base had to be secured. "They have their hands full bringing Afghanistan under control; but the temptation of pushing through the open terrain of Baluchistan, towards the sea is there, so the bolstering of Pakistan is needed. The 1959 Karachi Agreement should be invoked"[87], said Brzezenski. he even wanted to accelerate plans for a 100,000 US Rapid Deployment force (RDF) which could be used to put down 'bush fires' in distant lands[88].

On the contrary Carter had to face the criticism of his large and influential farming community who would be adversely affected by the ban on the export of 17 million metric tons of grain. Finding new markets would not be easy and the cost of storage would eat up the profits.

USSR

Marshal Nikolai Gargkov, Chief of the General Staff of the armed forces of USSR objected to the sending of Soviet troops into Afghanistan"[89]. Andrei D. Sakharov, the renowned Soviet intellectual and scholar, criticised the decision, taken by a small group of politburo members in secret, to send troops to Afghanistan. He was stripped of his honorary titles, arrested by the Soviets on 22 January, 1980 and sent to Gorky (400 kilometres to the east of Moscow, a place out of bounds to foreigners)[90]. Alexander Solzhenitsyn the famous Soviet author, said immediately after the invasion. "A Brezhnev who has connived at the ruin of his own people in the interest of foreign adventure has no Russian heart"[91].

Other Nations

Response by other nations was initially confined to strong statements only. The British government merely condemned the USSR and stated that 'the people of Afghanistan have the right to chose their own government without outside interference'. The Labour Party in the United Kingdom however described the invasion as 'naked Soviet aggression'[92]. West Germany called it 'an extremely serious matter that raises basic questions of international relations'. France and Turkey merely showed 'concern'[93]. Turkey's pro-Islamic Nation Salvation Party, however, urged the government to send military aid to the guerrillas[94]. The United Kingdom was also prepared to send arms to the *Mujahideen* but economic conditions did not permit it to do so. London was, however prepared to sell arms to them[95].

Anwar-us-Sadat of Egypt told NBC news:- "US sent me airplanes and told me please open your stores for us so that we can give the Afghans the armaments they need to fight - and I gave them the armaments ...."[96]. Grand Mufti of Egypt urged all Muslims to throw their weight behind the Muslim insurgents in Afghanistan[97]. Beijing vigorously condemned the hegemonistic designs of the Soviet Union and demanded the cessation of this aggression and intervention in Afghanistan. "It is a stepping stone to all Southeast Asia "said China[98]. Vice Foreign Minister of China, Zhang Heifang summoned the Soviet Ambassador in Beijing, J.S. Sheherbakov and conveyed to him that the Chinese

government demanded that the Soviet authorities immediately stop their aggression and withdraw all their forces from Afhanistan[99].

The response of East European countries was predictable. East Germany and Czechoslovakia called the Soviet Union a 'genuine friend of the Afghan people' and accepted the military intervention as an 'act of mercy'[100]. Poland and Hungary were hesitant to praise USSR while Romania hoped that force would be renounced[101]. It was left to Yugoslavia to declare that all foreign intervention under whatever form is unacceptable[102].

Mr. Sadeq Ghotabzadeh, the Foreign Minister of Iran, felt that Russia had taken advantage of the dispute between USA and Iran and accused Moscow of committing an act of aggression[103]. He went on to say that his government fully supported the struggle of the people of Afghanistan against the invasion of their country by the Soviet Union and condemned the Soviet Union. President Abol Hasan Bani Sadar charged that the Soviet invasion was part of a plan by Moscow to split Iran and move south towards the Indian Oceean[104].

India, which had a caretaker government under Charan Singh at the time of the Soviet invasion confined itself to giving a 'dressing down' to the Soviet Ambassador in New Delhi. According to an Indian official if India did not take a pro-Soviet line America would ignore them. Indian delegate to the United Nation, Brajesh Chandra Misra, even supported the Soviet position by criticising certain unidentified nations for arming, training and encouraging subversive elements[105]. He further asserted that India had no reason to doubt the Soviet claim that its troops had moved into Afghanistan at the invitation of the Aghan government[106].

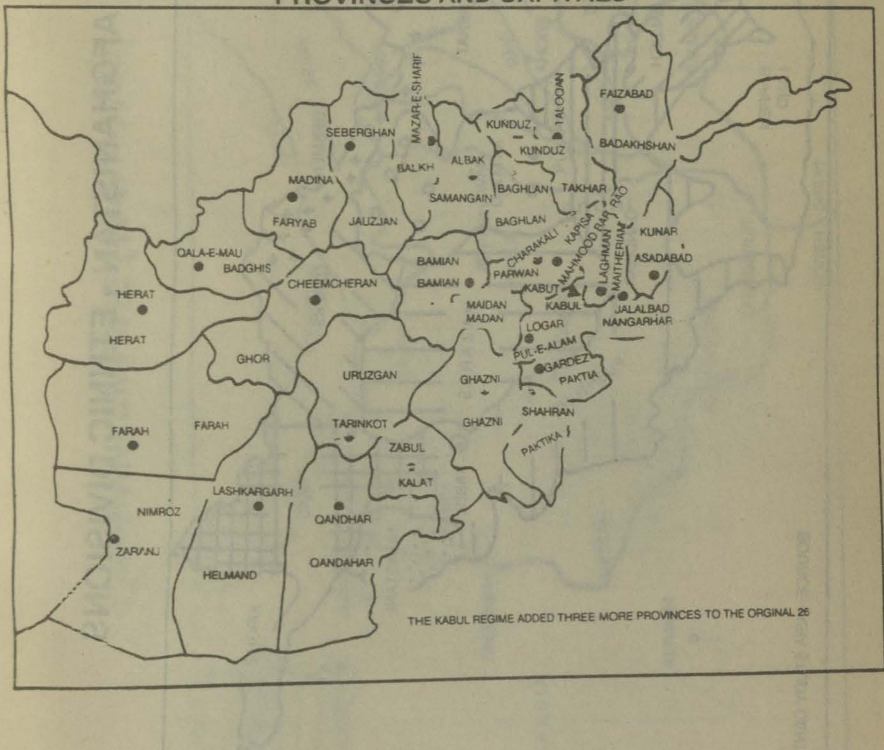
India's response however, began to change when they realised that the presence of Soviet troops in Afghanistan could become a reason for giving military assistance to Pakistan. The Indian Minister for External Affairs, Narsimah Rao, stated to the Indian Parliament on 17 June, 1980. "It is time to ask ourselves this Afghanistan has not become or is not likely to become, a pretext for those who wish to create further instability in that country"[107]. Rajiv Gandhi, during his visit to USA in June, 1985, insisted that the Soviets were invited into Afghanistan. On being questioned on the hypocrisy of India's stand on Afghanistan he replied "perhaps

you should define intervention for me"[108] referring of course to Grenada.

India and Russia's interests in Southwest Asia converged. Neither wanted a fundamentalist government in Afghanistan as it might result in a strategic consensus between the three conservative Islamic neigbours ie Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan - The Russians because of the growing ethnic unrest in their Muslim republics in Central Asia and India because their capacity to deal with Pakistan from a position of strength would be drastically reduced. Indira Gandhi, on becoming the Prime Minister of India, accepted Soviet assurances that they would withdraw from Afghanistan and condemned outside powers for giving aid to the 'rebels'[109].

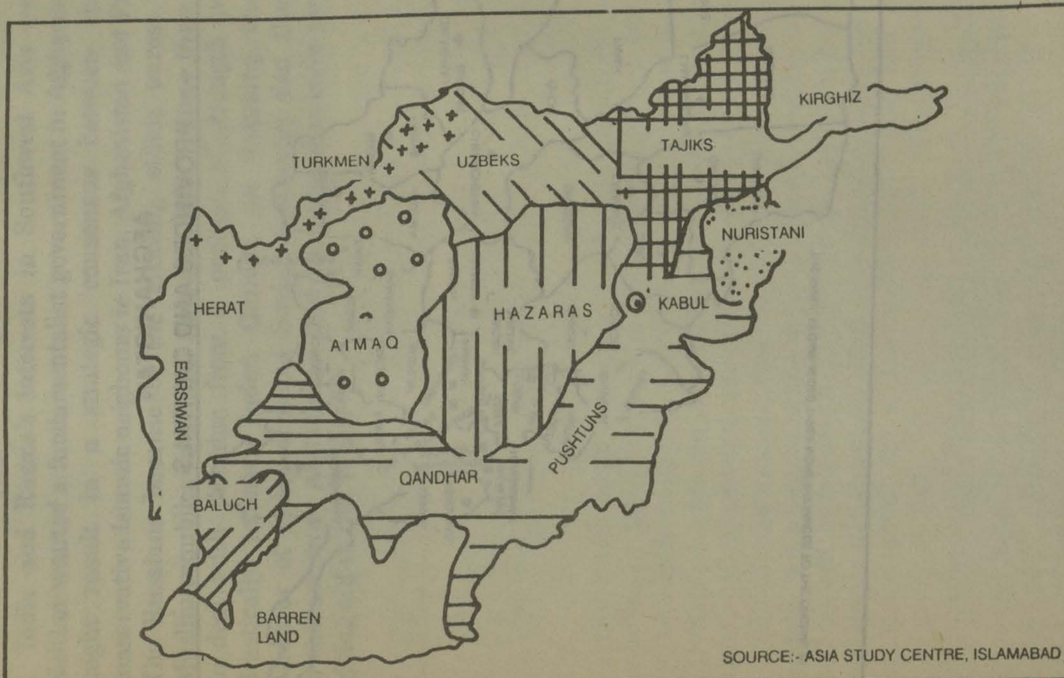
AFGHANISTAN

PROVINCES AND CAPITALS



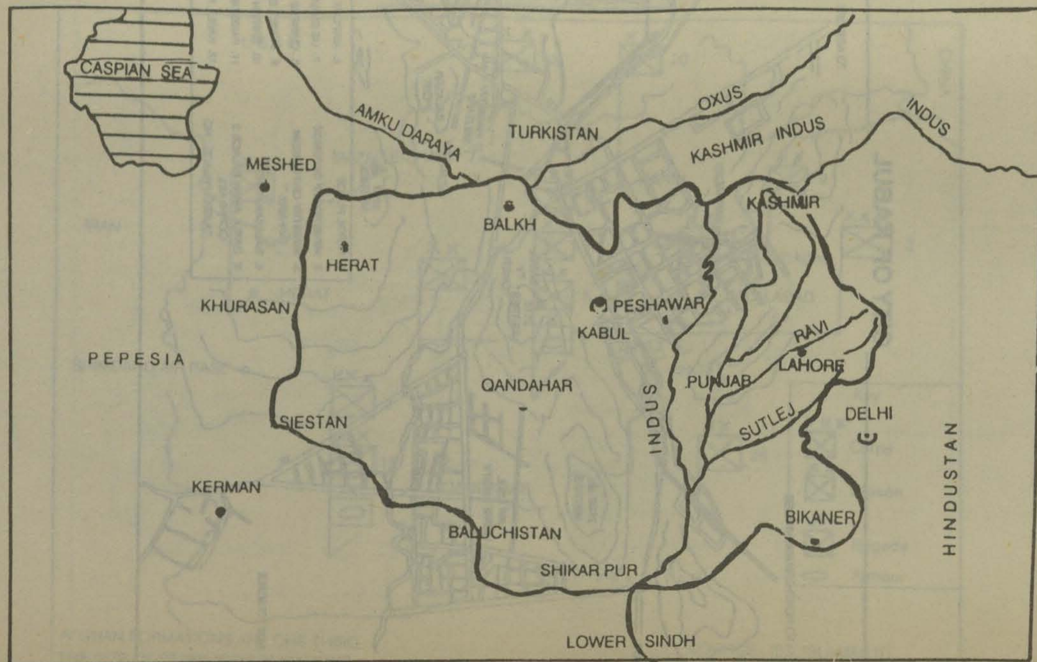
THE KABUL REGIME ADDED THREE MORE PROVINCES TO THE ORGINAL 26

AFGHANISTAN - ETHNIC DIVISIONS

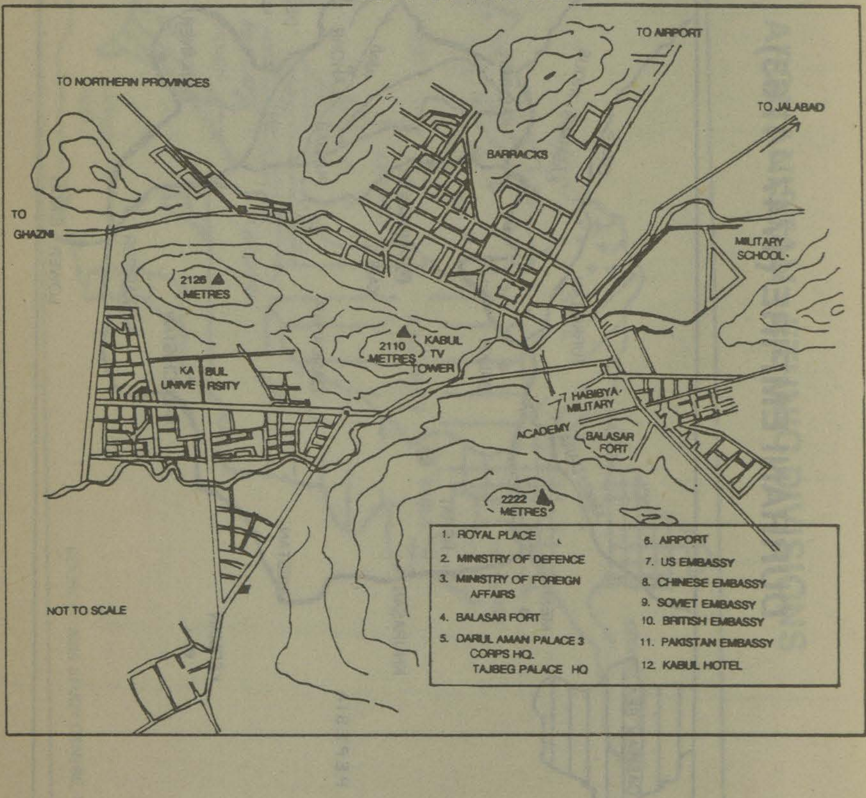


SOURCE:- ASIA STUDY CENTRE, ISLAMABAD

DURRANI EMPIRE (1747 - 1763)

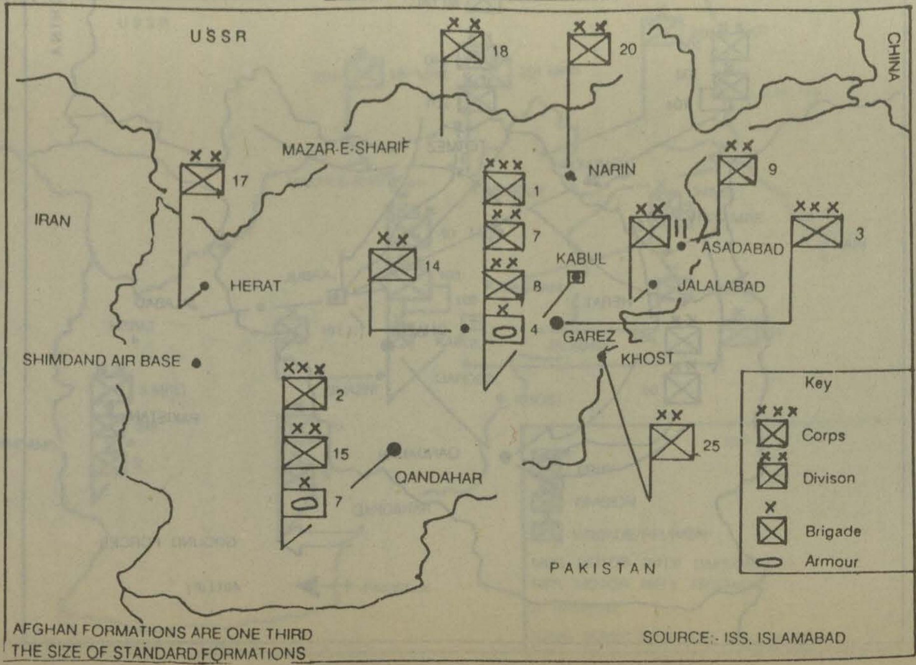


CITY OF KABUL

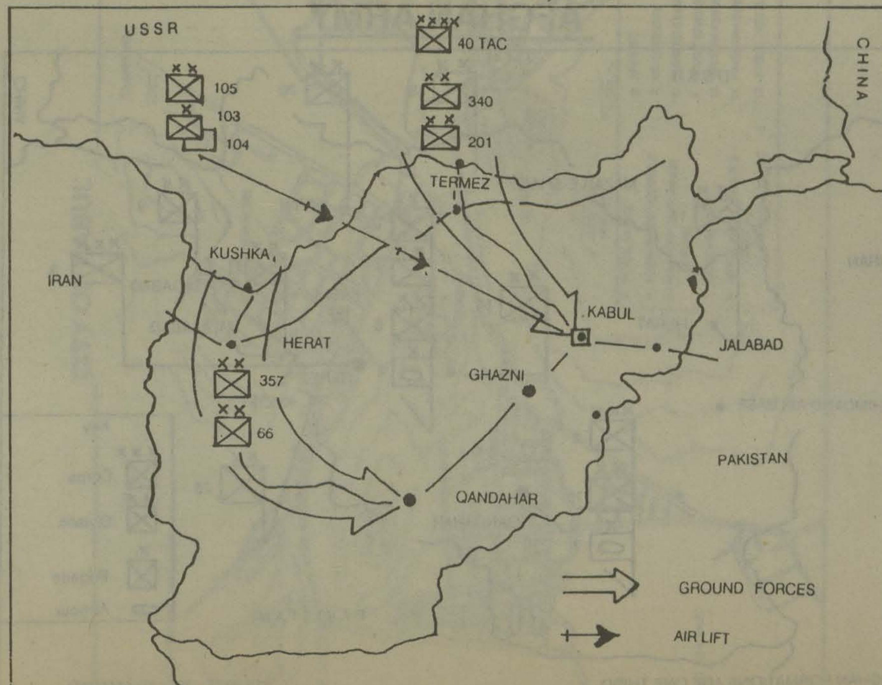


PEACE TIME DEPLOYMENT

AFGHAN ARMY

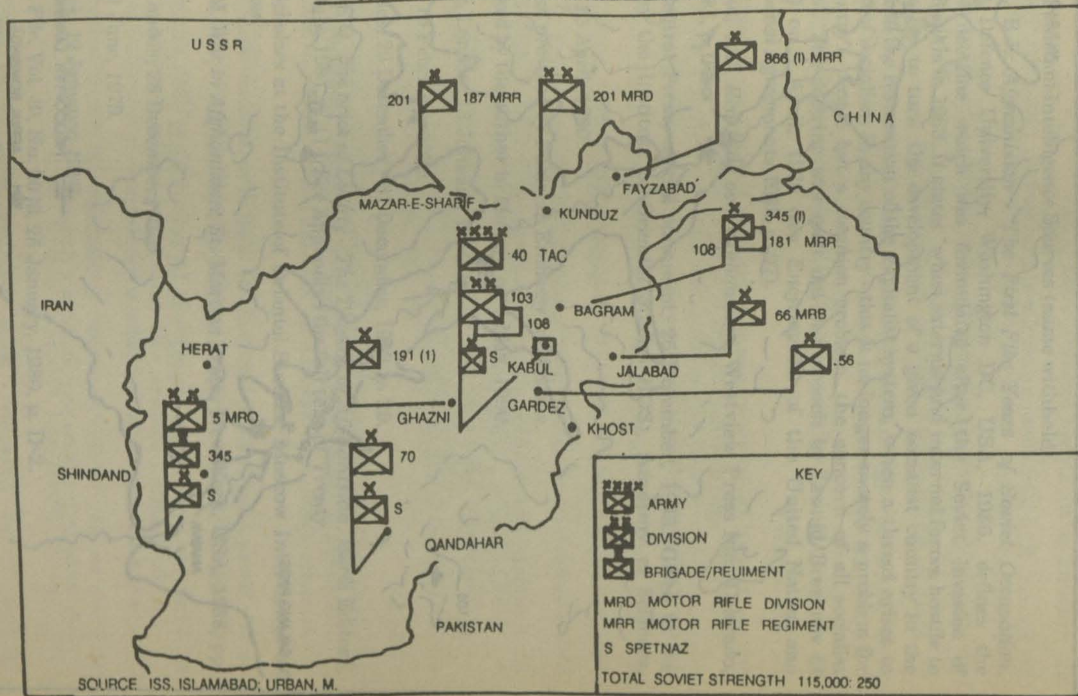


PLAN OF THE SOVIET INVASION
24 - 28 DECEMBER, 1979

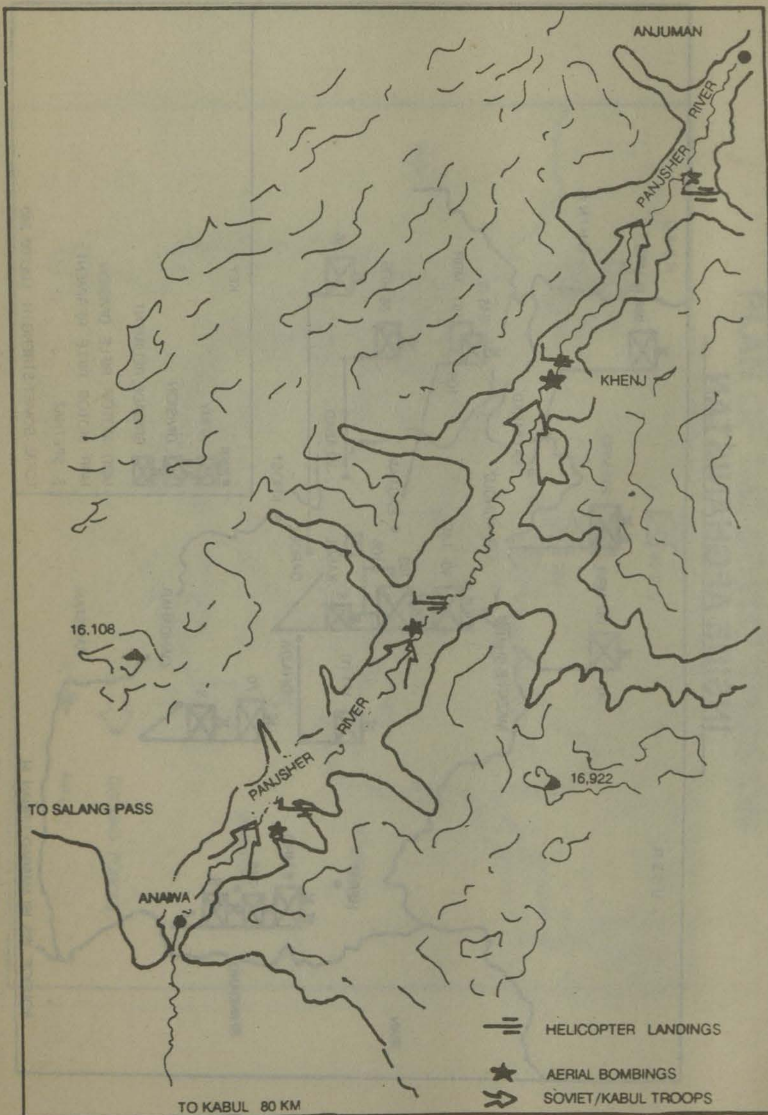


DEPLOYMENT OF SOVIET TROOPS

INSIDE AFGHANISTAN



PANJSHER VALLEY - MAY, 1982



Notes

1. Washington Star, May, 1980.
2. Reliable Pakistani Intelligence Sources (name withheld).
3. Amstutz, B.J., *Afghanistan - The First Five Years of Soviet Occupation*, National Defence University, Washington DC, USA, 1986, defines the Brezhnev doctrine which was formulated after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. It states "when external and internal forces hostile to socialism try to turn the development of a given socialist country in the direction of the restoration of the capitalist system, when a threat arises to the cause of socialism in any country - this is no longer merely a problem for that country's people but a common problem, the concern of all socialist countries". The doctrine was spelt out in a speech by Leonid Brezhnev at Budapest on 4 April, 1970 (see Encyclopedia of the United Nation and International Agreements 1985, p. 97).
4. Hammond, T.T., *Red Flag over Afghanistan*, Westview Press Inc., Colorado, USA, 1984, p. 97.
5. Soviet Central Press, official statement, 25 December, 1989. Given to the author by the Institute of Oriental Studies (IOS), Academy of Sciences, Moscow.
6. Izvestia, 25 April, 1990.
7. News item provided by Pakistan Embassy in Moscow.
8. Interviewed by the author in Moscow on 7 May, 1990.
9. Observer, London, 13 January, 1980.
10. Izvestia, 19 February, 1989.
11. New Times, 26 December - 31 December, 1989, p. 29.
12. Reshtia, S.Q. *The price of Liberty - The Tragedy of Afghanistan*, Bardi Editore, Roma, Italy, 1984, p. 114; See Appendix I for full text of Treaty
13. Senior Scholars at the Institute of Oriental Studies, Moscow Interviewed by the author.
14. Urban, M. *War in Afghanistan*, St. Martins Press, New York, USA, 1988, pp. 31, 32.
15. Times, London, 28 December, 1979.
16. Pravda, 1 June, 1979.
17. Newsweek, 12 January, 1980.
18. Facts on File, Vol. 40, No. 2040, 25 January, 1980, p. D-2.
19. Urban, p. 46.
20. Bonds, R, (ed) *Illustrated Directory of Modern Soviet Weapons*, Prentice Hall Press, New York, USA, 1986, p. 7 (Map showing boundaries of the 16 Soviet Military Districts).
21. Ibid, pp. 9-15.

22. *Afghanistan - A country study*, American University, Washington DC., USA, 1986, p. 305; Urban, p. 41.

23. Amstutz, p. 40; Urban mentions 2000, p. 40.

24. Hyman, A, *Afghanistan under Soviet Domination*, 1964-1983, The Macmillan Press Ltd., London, UK. 1984, p. 159.

25. Mascerenhas, article in London Times, Sunday, January, 1981.

26. Mass, R, article in Dew Republic, 19 January, 1980.

27. Klass, R, (ed) *Afghanistan - The Great Game Revisited*. Freedom House, New York,, 1987, p. 5.

28. Harrison, S., India, Pakistan and the US - Case History of a Mistake p. 15.

29. IOS, Moscow.

30. Air Assault Divisions known in Russian as Vozdushno - Desantnaya Voyska (VDV) are light divisions capable of being airlifted.

31. Dawn, 28 December, 1979.

32. Janes Soviet Intelligence Review, March, 1990, p. 114.

33. Facts on File, Vol. 40, No. 2046, 25 January 1980, p. F2.

34. Janes Soviet Intelligence Review, March 1990, p. 114.

35. American Foreign Policy Basic Documents 1977-1980, Department of State, Washington DC., USA, Document 415, p. 820 (statement of US permanent representative before UN Security Council on 6 January, 1980.

36. Janes Soviet Intelligence Review, March 1990, p. 114.

37. Ibid.

38. American Foreign Policy, Basic Document 1977-1980, Document 415, p. 820, (statement of US permanent Representative before UN Security Council on 6 January, 1980); corroborated by Pakistan's Ambassador in Kabul, Altaf A. Sheikh.

39. Air Borne Assault Gun, (ASU) can be lifted in an Antonov transport air craft. there are 18 Air Assault guns in each air assault division.

40. Professor Gankovsky, Interview in Izvestia, 4 May, 1980. He claims that he met the Russian soldiers who participated in the storming of the palace; where Amin was killed; Amstutz, p. 48.

41. Facts on file, 18 January, 1980 p. 27; Isby, C.I. *War in a Distant Country Afghanistan Invasion and Resistance* Arms and Armour Press, London, 1989 p. 24.

42. New Times (Moscow), No.5, February 1980, p. 20 (Karmal's Press Conference in Kabul, January 1980.

43. Amstutz, p. 51.

44. Ibid, pp. 51, 52.

45. Kabul New Times, 1 January, 1980.

46. Kabul New Times, 19 January, 1980.

47. Ibid.

48. Ibid, 12 January, 1980.

49. Washington Post, January 1980.

50. International Herald Tribune, 3-4 January 1980.

51. The Black Sea Port was captured by the Russians in 1695 from the Turks, but given back to them in 1711. It was re-captured by Catherine the Great in 1751.

52. Afghanistan Report, Institute of Strategre Studies, Islamabad, No. 58, February 1989, gives the dates when the Soviets overran the Muslim Khanates of Central Asia. Krighiz (1734), Azerbeijan (1800), Tashkent (1875), Uzbekistan (1884), Soviet-Afghan border 1896).

53. Washington Post, 14 August, 1980.

54. Christian Science Monitor, 6 March, 1980.

55. Rubenstein, A.Z., *Soviet Policy towards South and Southeast Asia - Rivalry in the Persian Gulf and South Asia*, Praeger Publishers, USA, 1983, p. 81.

56. New York Times, 13 March, 1980.

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58. Moss. R. Columnist of Daily Telegraph, London.

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60. The Trotsky Papers (1912-1922), Vol. I, London, p. 625.

61. New York Times, 27 January, 1980.

62. Christian Science Monitor, 29 February, 1980.

63. Washington Post, 14 January, 1980.

64. Ibid.

65. Bostan Sunday Globe, 4 January, 1980.

66. Hammond, p. 145, quoting Defence/Space Daily, 12 February, 1980 P. 223

67. Christian Science Monitor, 15 February, 1980.

68. Micheal Goldsmith of Associated Press, Kabul New Times, 22 January, 1980.

69. Los Angles Times, 3 March, 1980.

70. Austrian Chancellor Bruno Kriesky, quoted in Los Angles Times, 3 March, 1980.

71. Pravda, 31 December, 1979.

72. Misra, K.P., *Afghanistan in Crisis*, Vikas Publishing House, 1981, p. 12.

73. O' Balance E., *The Forgotten War*, Islamic World Defence Vol. 2, No. 1, January - March 1983, p. 28.

74. Interview with Ambassador Altaf A. Sheikh.

75. Times, London, 7 February, 1980.
76. Malik. H. (ed) Soviet American Relations with Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan, St. Martins Press, New York, 1987, p. 2.
77. UNGA Resolution, 2626 (XXV), 24 October, 1970.
78. Facts on File, Vol. 40, No. 2045, 18 January, 1980, p. 25.
79. Pravda claimed that there were 30 bases and 50 training centres inside Pakistan under CIA from July 1978 to November, 1979 and that 15,000 terrorists had been trained. Quoted in Times, London, 6 February, 1980.
80. Keesings Contemporary Archives, volume xxvii 308669, 15 May, 1981.
81. Bhargava, G.S. *South Asian Security After Afghanistan*, Lexington Books Ltd. Toronto, 1983, p. 44.
82. American Foreign Policy Basic Documents (1977-1970), Document 406, 26 December, 1979, p. 809.
83. International Herald Tribune, 2 January, 1980.
84. American Foreign Policy, Basic Documents (1977-1980), No. 418, p. 824.
85. International Herald Tribune, 31 December, 1979
86. American Foreign Policy Basic Document, (1977-1980), Department of State Wshington, Document 408, p. 810.
87. Economist, 5 January, 1980.
88. New York Times, 30 March, 1980.
89. New Times (Moscow), 3 April, 1982, p. 12.
90. News Week, 11 February, 1980; New Times (Moscow), February 1980, p. 22.
91. Foreign Affairs, Spring, 1980, p. 798.
92. International Herald Tribune, 29-30 December, 1979.
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94. Peter Blaker, Minister of State for CommonWealth and Foreign Relations, Pakistan Times, 26 March, 1981.
95. International Herald Iritune, 31 December, 1979.
96. San Francisco Chronicle, 24 September, 1981.
97. Observer, London, 31 December, 1979.
98. Economist, 5 January, 1980.
99. Observer, London, 31 December, 1979.
100. Ibid.
101. Ibid.
102. Ibid.
103. Facts on File, Vol. 40, No. 2045, 18 January, 1980, p. 27E.
104. Ibid,

105. Misra, p.78.

106. Ibid,

107. Ibid p.80

108. Far Eastern Economic Review, 25 January, 1980, p. 12.

109. Pakistan Times, 1 January, 1980.

4 Impact on Pakistan

"Big powers initiate moves in pursuit of their global policies. Small powers have only to cash on them".

Anon

The impact on Pakistan, of the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan was direct, wide ranging and far reaching. It had both negative and positive repercussions. On the negative side Pakistan was burdened with an additional 600,000 Afghan refugees. From 400,000 in November, 1979 the number of refugees in Pakistan rose to over one million by July, 1980. A further one million were added in the next eighteen months raising the total to nearly three million by early 1982[1]. This was the direct result of the attempt by the Soviet troops and the Kabul regime to liquidate the resistance and their supporters.

The other negative element in the Afghan situation, as far as Pakistan was concerned, was the threat from across its western border. Earlier the Afghan armed forces were too weak to attempt any forays into Pakistan and General Zia, therefore, felt quite secure in following his Afghan policy without the support of any other power. with a 100,000 Soviet soldiers now in Afghanistan, most of them deployed within striking distance of Pakistani territory, the security aspect now warranted serious attention. General Zia and his Chief of Staff, General Khalid Mahmud Arif, did not believe that there was an immediate danger of an attack on Pakistan by the Soviet Union and that the Soviet Union would need atleast two years to consolidate their position in Afghanistan[2]. However, the opportunities for hot pursuit, limited intrusions, border violations and subversive activities had certainly opened up[3]. The KGB and GRU could now be used to try and destabilise his government.

If the Soviets were allowed to suppress the resistance movement inside Afghanistan they could enlarge their aims subsequently. An interesting cartoon appeared in a book entitled 'Herblock on All Fronts' where a marshall of the Soviet armed forces is shown briefing Brezhnev on the military situation along USSR's southern border. Behind him hangs a large map of Southwest Asia. With his hand on Afghanistan he says "we had to go into Afghanistan to protect our southern flank. Now to protect Afghanistan's borders ....".[4] implying that the next target should be Pakistan. "When empires expand they create new peripheries" says Hafeez Malik, professor of international relations at Villanova University - an apt remark.

With the increase in *Mujahideen* activities inside Afghanistan, as a result of the Soviet invasion, and the fact that they were operating from Pakistani territory, the relations between the USSR and Pakistan deteriorated rapidly with General Zia as the main target.

The positive aspect of the Soviet invasion was the renewed interest of the United States in befriending Pakistan - the only turf now on which they could play ball in this region. General Zia knew this fully well "you take Pakistan out of this region and you will find that you have not one inch of soil where America can have influence" said Zia in March, 1980[5]. He made use of the new situation on his border to strengthen his armed forces and in the process to ensure his own survival. He taunted the Americans by saying "when you lost Vietnam you went home and cried. When the Soviets were kicked out of Egypt they went to Libya[6]" a hint to Washington that they should have diverted their military assistance to Pakistan. Pakistan once again was willing to act as the cat's paw in the superpower rivalry in this subsystem albeit for its own national interest. The Americans on their part forgot their previous allegations of violation of human rights in Pakistan. The nuclear non-proliferation issue, which was a major irritant in US-Pak relations, was put on the back burner. The tilt towards the 'largest democracy in the world' was adjusted by giving equal importance to Pakistan's security. The US arms embargo against Pakistan was lifted. USA reaffirmed the 1959 Karachi Agreement. Pakistan was now again an ally of the USA, a bullwork against communism and a counter weight against pro-Soviet India. Pakistan's $5.1 billion debt was re-scheduled taking into

consideration the country's precarious situation since the Soviet move into Afghanistan[7].

The Peoples Republic of China, a trusted friend of Pakistan and an adversary of the Soviet Union, declared its full support to Pakistan. So did Saudi Arabia, Egypt and some other conservative Muslim states. UN relief agencies and several non-governmental organisations (NGOs) began their relief operations in and around refugee camps, lessening the burden on Pakistan.

Options for Pakistan

There had been another change of government in Kabul. This time it was accompanied with the massive induction of foreign troops. Pakistan was faced with the problem whether it should recognise the new regime or not. It decided not to do so and to galvanise world public opinion for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan and the return of the Afghan refugees to their homeland.

What options did Pakistan have in December, 1979: (1) it could acquiesce and accept the fait accompli; (2) it could, if it was a big power like India, provide all out military support to the freedom fighters and achieve its objective of eliminating an adversary by force of arms or; (3) it could bring political pressure to bear on the Soviet Union along with covert assistance to the *Mujahideen*.

The presence of Soviet troops along the Pak-Afghan border would have been extremely uncomfortable even if it was assured that they would not attack Pakistan. With Afghanistan in Soviet hands Pakistan would be at the mercy of a superpower. It could become a target country for its KGB which could instigate an insurgency within Pakistan more easily using dissident elements and exiled politicians to raise ethnic issues with territorial connotations. With the Indo-Soviet Treaty of 1971 still very much at play India could use Soviet controlled Afghanistan to stir up trouble on Pakistan's western border forcing it to weaken its defences along the eastern frontier.

These may be exaggerated scenarios but Pakistan would never have been comfortable with Russian soldiers moving menacingly along the Pak-Afghan border. Turkey, Iran, China and Japan do manage to live as independent states inspite of being immediate neighbours of Russia. Pakistan would not be the only country to do so. However Turkey's territorial integrity is assured by being a

member of NATO. China is a nuclear power by its own right and can look after its independence without much outside support. Japan has US troops on its soil and its security is under written by the United States. Iran is a monolithic deeply motivated nation in which superpowers fear to tread. Pakistan had none of these protective attributes and hence was justified in working for the immediate withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan.

The other option was to get militarily involved in the Afghan conflict and, like India during the East-Pakistan crisis send its forces into Afghanistan in support of the *Mujahideen*. But the situation across the Khyber was not analogous to that of our eastern wing. Though their was indeed a great deal of infighting. The Afghans had no doubt risen up against their government. Pakistan, like India, had been flooded with refugees. Friendly, countries may have accepted the 'invasion' by Pakistan as a genuine rescue operation but there were major differences in the two situations: (1) With Soviet troops already inside Afghanistan a military confrontation could have threatened the security of Pakistan; (2) neither China nor United States would have provided the sort of guarantee which the Soviet Union gave to India in 1971; (3) Pakistan itself depended on foreign assistance to be able to sustain even a low intensity conflict for a long period and (4) internal disunity would not allow Pakistan a military adventure which may not have had the support of the entire nation.

The third option was to use all the diplomatic pressure that could be mustered to build up world opinion against the Soviet Union for violating the principles of the United Nations Charter and thus force them to leave Afghanistan. At the same time provide humanitarian assistance to the increasing number of Afghan refugees and full support to the freedom fighters. Finally this was the option that was adopted.

Pakistan's Response

On 28 December, 1979 (the day after the Soviet invasion) Mr. Sarwar Azimov, the Soviet Ambassador in Islamabad, sought an appointment with General Mohammad Zia-ul-Haq, the Chief Martial Law Administrator and called on his residence in Rawalpindi. He read out a statement saying that a limited Soviet military contingent had entered Afghanistan, at the invitation of the Afghan leadership for the limited purpose of assisting the

government of Afghanistan in putting an end to the armed interference from across the Pakistani border. He also said that the contingent would be withdrawn as soon as the purpose for which it was despatched was achieved[8]. When Agha Shahi asked him as to who invited the Russians he replied that it was Babrak Karmal. On being reminded that Karmal was not even in the country on 27 December, the ambassador fumbled while giving a reply. "I am not clear about the facts. I will have to check[9]" said the Soviet envoy and left.

A reply to the Kremlin leadership was sent on 29 December and an official statement from the Foreign Office was released in which it was mentioned that "Pakistan regarded the recent induction of foreign troops into Afghanistan as a serious violation of the norms of peaceful co-existence and the sacrosanct principles of the sovereignty of states and non interference in their internal affairs as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations .... and hoped that the foreign troops would be removed from Afghan soil forthwith[10]". Ambassador Sarwar Azimov who was summoned to the Foreign Office to receive this de'marche refused to accept it and was reported to have been extremely rude to Agha Shahi.

In the next few days Soviet troops were on the Pakistani border but General Zia was not a man to buckle under pressure. Imbued with a strong faith in his religion and determined to support the cause of Islam wherever it may be, he openly declared his whole-hearted assistance to the Afghan *Mujahideen* who were battling against heavy odds to rid their country of an alien ideology. His Afghan policy suited the United States as they could achieve their objective without committing their own forces.

President Carter rang up General Zia, on 29 December, and reaffirmed his commitment to Pakistan saying "I have been authorised by the US Congress to reaffirm that in case of aggression against Pakistan, the government of the United States .... will take such appropriate action including the use of armed forces as may be mutually agreed upon[11]". The British Foreign Secretary, Lord Carrington, visited Pakistan to discuss the Afghan situation on 17 January, 1980 and confirmed, what must have been music to Zia's ears, that arms to Pakistan are a must[12]. The Chinese Foreign Minister, Huang Hua, arrived in Islamabad on 18 January and gave a similar assurance. His

government had already condemned the hegemonistic action of the Soviet Union and had firmly demanded the withdrawal of all Soviet armed forces[13]. Kurt Waldheim, the UN Secretary General, flew in to Islamabad on 23 January to discuss the recent events in the region with national authorities in Pakistan. Habib Chatti, the Secretary General of the Organisation of Islamic Conference, came over on 25 January to prepare for a special session of the Islamic Foreign Ministers Meeting at Islamabad. Afghanistan had re-appeared on the political map and Pakistan became the venue for all activities connected with the Afghan problem.

General Zia, once described as an 'erratic Islamic fundamentalist' by many self-styled democratic nations, became a leader to be supported by all those who wanted to see communism contained. When Islamic ideology is used against communism it must be supported. When it is used to push Israel out of occupied Arab territories it must be prevented. When Islamic resurgence in Kashmir puts India in a corner, dialogue not war is recommended. Such is realpolitic. Armed with the backing of the Western world and that of the conservative Muslim States, Zia raised the price for his involvement in the superpower rivalry in Southwest Asia. The conflict in Afghanistan certainly had overtones of big power politics.

On 31 January, 1980, Capitol Hill informed congressional leaders of its intention to enter into a long term military support relationship with Pakistan[14]. On 3 February Zbigniew Brzezinski Carter's Adviser on National Security and Warren Christopher, US Deputy Secretary of State, visited Islamabad to convey to Zia, United States willingness to strengthen Pakistan's security in view of the Russian threat to its borders. The Pakistani President, now on a stronger wicket placed three conditions before Warren Christopher: (1) make the 1959 Karachi Agreement a binding document[15] so that it is assured that the United States would come to the assistance of Pakistan if the Russians move further southwards; (2) Washington would not interfere in Pakistan's internal affairs (by which he implied no insistence on holding of elections) and (3) Pakistan will continue its 'peaceful' nuclear programme[16]. Brzezinski was known to be strongly anti-Soviet and a hardliner. Much was expected of him in the way of meeting the defence needs of Pakistan in the new geo-strategic environment that prevailed.

However, during the course of the talks, it was revealed that the United States planned to offer $400 million military and economic assistance over a eighteen-month period. Out of this amount $200 million were for economic aid and the remaining $200 million for the purchase of weapons. General Zia considered this amount totally inadequate to meet the new threat that had developed from across the western border. In a later meeting when Zia read out his requirements, Brzezinski realised that there was a big gap between the offer and the request. According to General Arif, who was present along with Agha Shahi, then Adviser to the President on Foreign Affairs, at this meeting, Brzezinski called the offer 'seed money' which would be increased later.

Zia, scoffed at the paltry amount and rejected it outrightly. His close aides supported the rejection. Agha Shahi characterised it as "incommensurate with the gravity of the security threat. "Military aid of $200 million would have detracted rather than enhanced our security" he said. Later talking to some press correspondents Zia said "what can I buy with this sum," two aircraft, a few helicopters 'peanuts' (a word that went round the world immediately) such a paltry sum would diminish not enhance Pakistan's security because of provoking potential aggressors[17]". Zia was aware that Egypt was to get $3 billion in the same 2-year period for being a US ally in the Middle East why should Pakistan accept less. He rang up President Carter to tell him that his delegation had a very limited charter[18].

Carter, while wanting to support Pakistan, the only anti-Soviet, friend USA had in that region, was very mindful of India's reaction to the military aid to its adversary. Clark Clifford, an emissary of Carter to India is reported by Mohan Ram, correspondent of the Far Eastern Economic Review, as saying "US arms to Pakistan will be strictly in the context of the Soviet presence in Afghanistan and that US would ensure that such arms did not upset the military balance in the sub-continent[19]". US Ambassador to India, Robert F. Cohen, rushed home to counsel caution in helping Pakistan[20]. However, that was not to be. Carter lost the elections in 1980. The new incumbent at the White House Ronald Reagan saw a red tide flowing towards the Arabian Sea. The only 'ally' who could stop it was Pakistan. The price had to be raised for as a Washington Post correspondent said "Zia could be bought but not for $400 million[21]". In March 1981,

after a gap of more than a year, Senator Paul Tribble joined the majority of his colleagues in the Foreign Relations Committee in supporting an increase in both economic and military aid for Pakistan[22]. The policy of US assistance to Pakistan was to provide aid without provoking greater Soviet response; persuading India that Pakistan is no threat and coordinating efforts with other countries so that Pakistan does not appear to be a surrogate of USA. Pakistan on the other hand was, in addition to military equipment, also looking for technical know how so as to improve its defence production capability which the US had always been reluctant to provide.

Zia kept the US on tenter hooks by 'frightening' them about the Soviet threat. He used to ask for a map to be brought in whenever a US team came to see him about Afghanistan. It was specially prepared. As he used to open the covers of the folder a huge splash of red colour used to come into focus with Pakistan and Iran the only green between the red patch and the Arabian Sea. It was designed to give a shock effect[23]. Having shown the map he used to say "you cannot live in the sea and incite the enmity of the whales. You have to be friendly with them. The Soviet Union is on our doorstep, the US is 10,000 miles away[24]". It was meant to be a very subtle hint to Washington that Pakistan does have options.

There were differences of opinion on requesting of US aid. The Chief of Air Staff was strongly in favour of it as he was hoping to receive the pride of all air forces then, the F-16 supersonic, all weather, jet fighter with its look down, shoot down capability, fitted with the AIM 9-L Sidewinder missile capable of intercepting a hostile aircraft 40 kilometres away. In those days it was considered the best fighter aircraft in the world. He was also badly in need of radar coverage along both western and eastern borders to enable him to scramble his aircraft well in time. Without US aid all this would not have been possible.

The Vice Chief of Army Staff was neutral and was prepared to go along with either of the three lobbies, (Pro-US, non-aligned and anti-US). The Chief of Naval Staff was not interested as the integrated priority list prepared by Joint Staff Headquarters did not include the very expensive naval platforms which they needed[25]. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, General Mohammad Iqbal Khan, was against US aid as it could

raise more problems than solve them[26]. Mr Shahnawaz Khan, Secretary General in the Foreign Office was skeptical because massive US aid would result in a further deterioration of relations with USSR and India and could adversely affect Pakistan's position in the Non-Aligned Movement[27]. Foreign Minister Agha Shahi summed up the discussion as reflecting a consensus in favour of the US offer but not on concessional terms in respect of US military sales so as not to incur an obligation in the nature of being faced with a US demand for a quid pro quo.

Zia got what he wanted, F-16s from the United States, Kalashnikovs from Egypt, hand held surface to air missiles from China, Blowpipes from UK, money from Saudi Arabia, UNHCR and non-government agencies to look after the refugees.

The armed forces received state-of-the-art military hardware. Its potential to withstand pressure from India increased, and with that Zia's standing in his 'constituency' greatly improved. He was now assured of their support and could keep the opposition at bay. Some money was also available for economic development though much of it was not properly utilised due to bureaucratic red tape and corruption at all levels. On the negative side there were Afghan refugees increasing by the thousands daily (their impact on Pakistan has been discussed in a subsequent chapter). Political dissensions heightened, economic debt increased and law and order situation deteriorated.

Sahabzada Yaqub Khan, who was then Pakistan's Ambassador to USSR and whose views General Zia greatly respected, being his senior in the armed forces, gave his assessment of the situation. The gist of which was either we accept the presence of Soviet troops in Afghanistan and live with it or if the aim,. was to force their withdrawal, substantial US aid would be necessary. President Zia's remarks were "The Afghans are fighting the war for Pakistan. We must support them. American interest has been re-generated because of Afghanistan. Let us cash on this[28]". However, Zia was against giving any bases to USA." I rule it out totally" he said[29]. Agha Shahi maintains that subsequently Zia offered military bases to McFarlane in June 1981 (which was the cause of his resignation). Ironically McFarlane denied the offer[30].

The new US administration under Ronald Reagan agreed to provide $3.20 billion aid to Pakistan over a period of five years (1982-1986 both inclusive). Reagan accepted that Carter was

wrong in not giving full support to Pakistan and that he would like to make amends.

General Arif, who was present at a meeting between General Zia and President Reagan in Washington in December 1982, found him to be very positive in his support for US aid to Pakistan. According to him Reagan said "we will strengthen you". Agha Shahi while agreeing to the US aid package was skeptical of being drawn into the US fold again which could embarrass Pakistan in the NAM. (Pakistan had left CENTO in March, 1979 and had been admitted to the Non-Aligned Movement in September, the same year). He was also felt that it could alienate Khomeni's Iran, detract from a non-aligned support on Afghanistan's resolutions in the UN and deprive Pakistan of credibility in Soviet eyes in the forthcoming Geneva negotiations on Afghanistan. He, therefore, was against US arms flow to the *Mujahideen* through Pakistan and is reported to have told US authorities. "We cannot allow ourselves to become a conduit for the flow of arms to the *Mujahideen*"[31] which ironically it did. Agha Shahi was against any atempt by USA to supply arms to the *Mujahideen* directly. He wanted the flow of weapons to be controlled entirely by Pakistan. This was also General Zia's view. The reason why Pakistan did not want a direct US pipeline to the *Mujahideen* was the left to themselves the US could escalate the struggle to the point of exasperation of the Soviet Union. They could then make India attack Pakistan in which case US would not come to Pakistan's rescue. Besides direct US involvement would undermine Pakistan's credibility as a negotiating partner for a political solution. Agha Shahi maintains that all these considerations were put to President Zia and approval obtained before he negotiated the $3.2 billion aid package with US Secretary of State Alexander Haig. Infact, Agha Shahi went on to explain that Zia emphasised to him that first the new relationship with the US should be settled before the US aid offer could be taken up[32].

Pakistan continued to take an active interest in the resistance against the pro-Soviet government in Afghanistan. Views on supporting US interests in the region were, however, divided. Since the interests of Pakistan and the United States had converged at this point of time the pro-US lobby held sway.

Notes

1. Brigadier Azhar S., *Humanitarian Assistance Programme for Afghan Refugees in Pakistan, Chief Commissionarate for Afghan Refugee, government of Pakistan*, Islamabad, July, 1984, p. 13.
2. Interview with General Khalid Mahmud Arif, former Chief of Staff of General Mohammad Zia-ul-Haq on 4 October, 1989.
3. Pakistan recorded more than 400 border violations from December, 1979 to April, 1982. See International Herald Tribune, 14 April, 1982.
4. Hammond, T.T., *Red Flag Over Afghanistan*, Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado, 1984, p. 136.
5. Newsday, 4 March, 1980.
6. Los Angeles Times, 7 February, 1980.
7. New York Times, 16 July, 1980.
8. Interview with General Arif.
9. Ibid.
10. For full text of the official statement by Pakistan see Dawn, 30 December, 1979.
11. Foreign Policy Basic Documents USA, 1977-1980, Document 408, p. 810.
12. Pakistan Times, 18 January, 1980.
13. International Herald Tribune 31 December, 1979.
14. New York Times, 1 February, 1980 p. a1.
15. Congressional Quarterly, 26 January, 1980, p. 6.
16. Interview General Arif.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. Far Eastern Economic Review, 15 February, 1980, p. 13.
20. Chicago Tribune, 19 February, 1980, p. 13.
21. Washington Post, 17 March, 1980.
22. Letter to Miraj M. Siddiqui dated 16 April, 1985. President Muslim Development Corporation, Virginia, written by Senator Paul Tribble in reply to the letter from Miraj Siddiqui. The Senator did also mention that the Congress remained concerned about Zia's (so-called) attempt to achieve a nuclear capibility.
23. Interview with Lieutenant General Syed Refaqat, former Chief of Staff of President Zia-ul-Haq on 8 January, 1990.
24. New York Times, 16 January, 1980.
25. Interview General Arif.

26. Discussion with General Mohammad Iqbal Khan, Former Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee in July, 1990.

27. Interview General Arif.

28. Ibid.

29. New York Time, 18 January, 1980.

30. Interview Agha Shahi, 1 August, 1991, at Islamabad.

31. Foreign Policy Basic Documents, USA, 1977-1980 Re-checked with Mr Agha Shahi.

32. Interview Agha Shahi - 1 August, 1991.

5 War of Liberation (Military Dimension)

"The Afghan will put up with poverty and even insecurity of life but he will never tolerate being ruled by foreigners".

Lord Lawrence
Viceroy of India
(1878 - 1880)

The Russians had robbed the *Mujahideen* of a possible victory by sending over a hundred thousand troops into Afghanistan in support of the PDPA regime. For the *Mujahideen* it was no longer a question of not accepting the decrees being introduced by a Marxist government. From now on it became a struggle for the liberation of their country. The eviction of foreign troops from their soil was now their supreme objective. The call for a *jehad* against the godless Russians, who had forcibly occupied their land, was supported by nearly all segments of the Afghan society except for the few thousand PDPA members, and loyal government functionaries. Most of the other Afghans either joined the *Mujahideen* or were covertly their sympathisers.

Thomas T. Hammond, Professor of History at the University of Virginia, in his book 'Red Flag over Afghanistan', mentions about a 'children's revolt' in April and May, 1980. According to him boys boycotted classes, girls threw their scarves at Afghan men and yelled "you wear these we will take the guns and go after the Russians." Death to Brezhnev and death to traitors was written with the blood of martyrs[1].

Not only did the number of freedom fighters increase but there was now a qualitative change in the fighting as US weapons, Saudi money and Pakistan's 'humanitarian assistance' began to have their effect. The scale and size of the resistance rose manifold. The fighting spread to almost all of the 26 provinces[2]. But the most significant aspect of the struggle was the desire of the different resistance groups to unite and form a common alliance which could receive and distribute the weapons coming from friendly countries to their respective commanders in the field. The leaders of the alliance could then also act as the spokesman of the *Mujahideen* when dealing with foreign countries.

The 'undeclared war' had now to be fought both at the military and political level for international pressure had to be applied to force the Red army to leave Afghanistan. But negotiations from a position of weakness would not yield the desired results. The Kabul regime and Soviet troops had to be forced into a position where they would be willing to talk about the withdrawal of foreign forces from Afghanistan. For this, coordination between the various field commanders and an agreed strategy, in addition to better weapons was needed.

While resistance spread to nearly all the provinces it was most severe in the Panjsher valley, around Qandahar, Herat, Jalalabad and Khost.

The Panjsher valley

The Panjsher valley runs along the Panjsher river about 100 kilometres northeast of Kabul and is within a day's march from the strategic Salang pass. It is about 70 kilometres long and on an average 15 kilometres wide at a height of 7,000 feet (2,058 metres). At some places it narrows down considerably. The mountains of the Hindu Kush on either side rise to about 15,000 feet (4,410 metres). The slopes are steep and inaccessible to motorised transport which can only move along the metalled road that runs through the valley, cross-country movement for wheeled vehicles is generally not possible. Numerous places for road blocks and guerrilla actions exist. The northern part of the valley is fertile while that in the south have barren mountain sides. Occasional orchards provide certain amount of cover and concealment from the air. The valley is relatively close to the Pakistani border from where supplies take 3 days to reach on

mule pack. The population of the Panjsher valley is about 100,000 concentrated in about 100 to 120 villages, the majority of the people living in the valley being Tajiks. The major towns in the Panjsher valley are Anawa at the southern entrance of the valley and Anjuman guarding the northern end[3].

Panjsher came into prominence as early as 1975 when an abortive coup took place against Daud in this region. The rebellion was engineered by Gulbadin Hikmatyar. The field commander being Ahmad Shah Masud who, over the years, gained international fame as a courageous fighter, and a respected leader in the Panjsher valley. Ahmad Shah (34) a Tajik from the Panjsher valley is the son of an army officer. After his early education in a French school in Kabul he went on to study engineering at a Russian-run Polytechnic College in the capital but did not wait to get his engineering degree. He chose politics instead and began taking part in political activities against the Daud regime because of its leftist orientation. Fearing persecution he, like so many others, fled to Pakistan in 1973. Two years later he went inside Afghanistan to join the resistance movement against the government[4]. Having earned his spurs he came back to Peshawar and spent his time studying the theory of guerrilla warfare and reading about the tactics employed by famous guerrilla commanders in their respective countries.

After gaining additional knowledge of how to conduct 'partisan' activities he went back to Panjsher in 1978 to carry forward the resistance against the new pro-Soviet government of Nur Mohammad Taraki. He soon organised a *Mujahideen* force of about 200 with which he compelled the deputy governor of Kapisa province to flee. His followers also temporarily blocked access to the valley. However pitted against a superior force he, along with his small group of freedom fighters, went to his hideout in the upper reaches of the Hindu Kush to mark time for a bigger guerrilla action later.

He built around him a small group of dedicated anti-revolutionaries. Imbued with an Islamic spirit of *jehad* against an atheistic ideology he soon gathered more and more supporters as he moved down the valley. He also ensured that the force he was building was properly organised, trained and well disciplined. He formed them into small sub-units and taught them hit and run tactics. The *Mujahideen* began their operations by attacking small

government outposts including police stations ensuring that they achieved success every time by not taking on a task beyond their capability. By January, 1980 Masud and his men controlled the entire Panjsher valley.

Masud was affiliated to professor Burhanuddin Rabbani's Jamiat-e-Islami. His fighting strength in 1982 was estimated at over 3,000[7]. The fighters were divided into *mutaharrics* (mobile elements) and *sabt* (steadfast group)[8]. The former carried out offensive operations like blowing up of bridges, destroying installations and attacking government posts. The other group was trained for defensive operations. They remained static and were given the task to protect vital areas including ammunition dumps, supply depots and headquarters. The size of the fighting unit depended on the task given to them. Usually they were 50 to 100 strong and equipped with hand held anti-aircraft weapons to defend themselves against air attack. He must have learnt about this division of guerrillas into two groups from the Vietcong and the Algerian FLN.

The *mutaharrics* were organised along the lines of a regular army with platoons of 30 men each. Two or three platoons forming a company which was to be the largest fighting unit. His men were regular soldiers receiving free food, medical attention, clothing and weapons in addition to a nominal allowance for sundry expenses[9]. They were equipped with the Soviet-made AK-47 rifles. In addition each group had one mortar launcher, a ZPU-2 double barrelled anti-aircraft gun, three rocket propelled grenade launchers (RPGL) and three heavy machine guns[10]. Their stocks of ammunition and food were mostly obtained by raiding government convoys passing through bottlenecks. Getting stronger and more confident day by day Masud's men raided the Bagram air base on the outskirts of Kabul, from his positions in the Panjsher valley. They generally carried out small scale operations and succeeded in killing Kabul regime and Soviet soldiers and destroying aircraft and helicopters on the ground. They seldom, if ever, captured and held territory outside the valley.

In September, 1980 a combined force of Soviet and Afghan troops supported by heliborne assault units tried to clear the Panjsher valley of the so called 'bandits'. Masud and his brave warriors were pushed back but not beaten. they claimed to have

inflicted heavy casualties including the destruction of 10 helicopters[11]. This was the first serious attempt by government troops to flush out the *Mujahideen* from a strategic area. This was also the first of a series of battles to control the strategic valley of Panjsher. In November, 1980 the Soviets made another attempt to clear the Panjsher valley from anti-government forces as raids on the Salang highway, which was their life line, continued from Ahmad Shah's stronghold. The Russians could not, however, succeed as Masud's men just faded away every time they were attacked to reappear after the Red army had withdrawn from their area.

Masud was not the one to get cowed down. He launched a daring raid on the Bagram air base, 48 Kilometres away, in January, 1981, despite the severe winter conditions, and destroyed a huge Antonov-22, heavy transport plane on the tarmac[12]. It was too much for a superpower to be thus humiliated by a band of irregulars so a full fledged coordinated attack by the Soviet troops and the Afghan forces from the Central Corps at Kabul; was launched against Ahmad Shah Masud. The attack carried on for three weeks. The objective of the Kabul regime again was not to capture and occupy the valley but to destroy the guerrilla bases from where the raids were being carried out. After inflicting heavy casualties on the Soviet/Afghan forces Masud withdrew his men to his mountain caves only to come back again when the *Shuravis*[13], and their clients had gone.

During the summer of 1981 fighting again broke out in the Panjsher valley. This time Karmal's forces at the neck of the valley were attacked. This was followed by the defection of a complete battalion of Afghan troops from the small garrison town of Charikar[14] in the eastern province of Kunar close to the Pakistani border. In August the guerrillas raided the town and executed seventy non-combatant members of the PDPA[15]. It is unfortunate that the otherwise disciplined *Mujahideen* of Ahmad Shah Masud, who were generally known as a brave enemy, should have permitted the slaughter of innocent civilians who for the sake of rewards may have enlisted in the PDPA. Unwanted killing only reduces the chances of defections.

Kabul, retaliated by sending a large Soviet/Afghan force to teach Masud a lesson. The attacking force consisted of one regiment of Russian troops and one regiment of the Afghan army.

They succeeded in flushing out the guerrillas but only temporarily. Though this time, they established a base at Anjuman a small village which controlled the entry and exit into the valley from the north when the snows melt, thus hoping to keep the guerrillas out of the valley.

In late April, 1982 the *Mujahideen*, under the control of the legendary Ahmad Shah Masud attacked the Bagram Air Base. Several groups of guerrillas about 600 to 700 men in all breached the security perimeter of the Soviet air force base at night and using their rockets and mortars destroyed 23 aircraft and killed a number of Soviet soldiers[16]. A few weeks later, on 15 May, 1982 a 15,000[17]-strong combined task force, three fourth of which were Russian troops, moved into the Panjsher valley from the south under the command of 108 Motor Rifle Division. The operation was carried out in several phases. First: the Panjsher gorge at the southern entrance of the valley was captured by the Afghan troops to prevent the *Mujahideen* and the civilian population from escaping. Then an aerial reconnaissance of likely targets was carried out which was followed by aerial bombardments of the villages by SU-25s, SU-17s and MiG-21s. This phase lasted for a week. Each bombardment was of short duration to avoid being shot down because adequate air cover could not be provided at various places at the same time. Hence even a week's bombardment did not cause many casualties among the *Mujahideen* nor among the civilians as they moved out during the day and came back at night when the bombing was stopped. After the seven days bombing operation para landings on defiles in the centre of the valley to block any exit to the north took place. Approximately 3,000 para troopers from 103 Air Assault Division took part. After strategic points in the valley had been occupied a mechanised column from 108 Motor Rifle Division began to move up the valley. The column was preceded by the GPZ (Route Security Patrol) equipped with T-62 tanks and bulldozers[18]. They were to clear the boulders pushed down from the adjoining hills by Masud's men and were to remove all other obstacles.

It is then that the *Mujahideen* went into action. They ambushed the column at several places, destroying tanks, armoured personnel carries, and the best part of a Soviet motor rifle company. The Soviets asked for air strikes by helicopter gunships, which were directed by forward observation officers, on to the *Mujahideen*. Not to be outdone this time the Soviets moved

another force from the north blocking the exit route in that direction as well. The new Soviet forces moving down the valley, to reinforce the air-landed troops, was itself ambushed at several places. Russians were reported to have lost over 100 soldiers in the three days it took to cover the 40 kilometres to the center of the valley.

This major offensive of the Soviets in which they launched a well coordinated attack by ground and air-landed troops supported by intense aerial bombardment helped them to secure the Panjsher valley. For the first time Panjsher valley was in Soviet hands. The Russians suffered in all between 300 to 400 killed. The Afghan army lost nearly a thousand soldiers. One hundred brave freedom fighters of the valley laid down their lives in the defence of their homeland.

The '*dushman*'[19] had retreated to the mountains to fight another day. "When the enemy withdraws we advance" when the enemy advances we retreat' said Mao. Masud followed that principle to the letter. These tactics became quite frustrating for the government forces as they were unable to destroy the spirit of the partisans.

In August, 1982 the Soviets planned another major offensive against Ahmad Shah Masud's guerrillas in Panjsher. About 12,000[20] Soviet and Afghan soldiers were employed. As before, several days of aerial bombardment preceded the advance into the valley. Heliborne landing on the villages commanding vulnerable points were coordinated with troops moving through the area. After several days of warding off the ambushes and clearing the road blocks created by Masud's men the Soviets succeeded in occupying the valley once again. Masud withdrew his *Mujahideen* to his hideouts higher up in the subsidiary valleys in Panjsher.

But this time the Russians were determined to eliminate the 'bandits' in this strategic area once for all. Having pushed the 'rebels' into their caves on higher ground the Red army along with the Kabul regime forces pressed forward their attacks. Unlike previous offensives the Soviets decided to establish a strong base on the floor of the valley and from there carry out their offensives in the smaller inlets which joined the main valley. Their tactics of dropping elite units by helicopters to block the exit routes of the partisans was accomnpanied by ground forces moving up the slopes. Heavy aerial bombardment and these small pincer

movements finally broke the back of Masud and his band of *Mujahideen* referred to by a western journalist as 'the third superpower'[21]. When all was over Panjsher took a toll of over 5,000 casualties. In the two offensives launched in 1982 the Soviets lost 2,000 men and the Afghan army 1,200, Masud sacrificed 180 of his brave *mutaharriks* and 1,200 innocent civilians were killed as a result of the aerial bombardment. A large number left the valley to become refugees in their own country. Several thousands found their way to join their brethren in Pakistan.

Government forces remained in the valley for a month burning and destroying crops and houses forcing the Lion of Panjsher to appeal for food for his men.

The Lion Backs Down

Quality of leadership demands that the hand is played according to the cards one holds, aggressively, when stacked in ones favour, cautiously, when the odds are even and laying it down when there are no high cards at all. Unlike other diehards and conservatives amongst the resistance leaders Masud was more pragmatic, realistic and practical. Realising that the civilian population of the valley had been the ones that had suffered the most and that the logistic support he received from them would not be forthcoming unless the bombing and strafing from the air is stopped he agreed on a cease fire. This stipulated that the *Mujahideen* would not attack convoys moving from the Soviet border to Kabul along highway 2 and in return government forces would not attack the non-combatants in the valley. In the struggle for the Panjsher valley the government forces had won but for how long?

The cease-fire was bitterly criticised by Gulbadin Hikmatyar who called it a 'sell out'[22]. Others felt that this was a move by the Soviets to divide the *Mujahideen* parties. But Masud knew what he was doing. While he stopped raiding convoys on highway 2 as promised he sent his mobile columns to assist others in ambushing Kabul troops elsewhere. Masud did not sit idle during the period of the cease-fire. Taking advantage of the lull and with the Soviet's 108 Motor Rifle Division having been withdrawn from the valley Masud began to train his body of men and rebuild the infrastructure which he would need when he restarted the insurgency.

Kabul radio and television made much of the success achieved in Panjsher. They proudly announced that the victorious 'Afghan troops had 'liberated' the people of the Panjsher valley from the 'criminal' Masud band. They claimed to have rebuilt the schools, mosques and hospitals destroyed by the counter revolutionaries. Masud was depicted as a traitor who had fled away with the emeralds and lapis lazuli of the valley and who had been involved with the French women doctors working for a French medical mission in Panjsher[23]. But no amount of disinformation could take away the respect the local inhabitants had for their 'Robinhood' and his band of 'Panjsheris'.

Calm prevailed in the Panjsher valley for a year as both sides licked their wounds and diverted their attention elsewhere. Time had come to extend the agreement for another year that is if both previous adversaries were to agree. But that was not to be. Masud having rested, re-equipped and re-grouped his Mujahids was ready to harass the enemy again. By April, 1984 highway 2 near the Salang tunnel was under attack as before. Convoys destined for Kabul were delayed and were suffering losses. The thorn which was bleeding the Soviet supply lines had to be removed. So a decision to launch another major attack in the valley was taken by the Soviets.

Major General Saradov assembled a force from 108 Motor Rifle Division. The group consisted of several motor rifle regiments, an air assault regiment and an independent air assault battalion. The Afghan force was commanded by Brigadier Shahnawaz Tarin from the Central Corps in Kabul. It consisted of the bulk of 8 and 20 Division and 37 Commando Brigade and a battalion each from Jalalabad, Ghazni and Kabul. The total strength of the attacking forces was 10,000 Soviet and 5,000 Afghan troops[24]. The size of the force was the same as in the last offensive but the ratio between Soviet and Afghan forces was this time more in favour of the Russians.

Five thousand defenders of the valley under the command of their internationally know leader waited for the offensive to come. Masud had been able to improve the fighting efficiency of his men by obtaining anti-aircraft guns, heavy machine guns, captured tanks (one T-62 and several T-55s) and three 120 mm Howitzers[25]. Key roads in the valley were mined and defiles covered by fire. Masud had learnt that the best from of defence

was to be tactically on the offensive. So he sent out strong fighting patrols of 500 men to attack the Salang road. The Soviets retaliated with encircling the Mujahids by dropping heliborne troops behind the *Mujahideen*. Fired at from two directions the freedom fighters broke up and disappeared into the mountains after suffering heavy casualties. This did not deter Masud. He sent another force the next day (20 April, 1985), this time to attack Anawa a small outpost at the mouth of the valley. This was too much for the Russians who came down with a heavy hand using a hammer to kill a fly. heavy Soviets bombers (TU-16s) flew in from Soviet air bases and started a 'rolling barrage' behind which ground forces began to move forward. (The term rolling barrage means a wall of exploding shells moving forward at the speed of a marching column destroying men and weapons that come in its path. Behind this wall of fire the attacking infantry move in comparative safety. (This is usually carried out by the artillery as it requires a high degree of accuracy).

This World War II type of attack, more effective on the plains than in the hills, forced Masud to withdraw his men from the valley and take up positions higher up in the mountains. Government troops supported by an armoured column continued to clear the valley using heliborne troops to cut off the routes of withdrawal. The infantry in mechanised vehicles joined up with them. This slow but methodical advance assured the attackers of capturing the towns in the valley. To prevent the insurgents from escaping, Afghan troops from Jalalabad moved north through the valleys of Alishong and Kentiwar Pass on the eastern side of the hills. Kabul regime forces also crossed the hills from the west to establish blocking postions in the towns at the northern neck of the Panjsher valley. Against this double envelopment the Mujahids had no chance of succeeding. So they melted away from the valley and went higher in the mountains.

The Soviet and DRA troops had this time widened their area of operation. Instead of operating only along the Panjsher valley, they combined it with a simultaneous advance along the neighbouring valleys of Andarab and Alishong. The entire Panjsher valley was again in government hands. Kabul radio broadcast their victory saying "we bring you good news that the criminal band of Ahmad Shah no longer exists"[26]. Though they did have the control of the valley it was entirely false on their part to say that Masud and his followers had been totally eliminated.

The Lion of Panjsher was very much alive. He had only changed his den.

Total casualties, in the first five days of fighting, suffered by the Soviet and Afghan forces came to 200 while 150 of Masud's men got killed[27].

Unlike preceding operations the victors decided to remain in the lower half of the valley from where attacks on the Salang road were usually made. Three brigades of the Afghan army thus got bogged down. By doing so they thought they would be able to ensure that the road to Kabul remained open, but the *Mujahideen* used other strongholds to disrupt traffic along highway 2. So the objective of the latest offensive, which was to make the road from the Soviet border to Kabul safe from attack by the 'rebels' was not really achieved.

To let the Russians know that he was very much alive and effective Masud attacked convoys on highway 2 destroying as many as 300 trucks in the spring of 1985. As summer approached the fortresses which the Afghan troops had erected in the Panjsher valley were attacked and their ammunition dumps blown up. The strongest of these forts was in Pechgur in the middle of the valley. The fort was held by an Afghan army battalion supported by four 76 mm guns, two T-55 tanks and five BTR-60 personnel carriers. Barbed wire, minefields and sand bags strengthened the defence of the fort.

On 15 June Masud decided to attack the fort. He divided his force into three groups. Group 1 of 60 men was to clear the minefield; Group 2 was to establish a base of fire and provide mortar and artillery support. Group 3 was to carry out the assault. The total strength of this force was about 500 Mujahids. The attack commenced at 6.30 p.m. and lasted throughout the night. Complete surprise was achieved as the entire operation had been kept a secret and was carried out in the cover of darkness. The attack went as planned, each group disciplined and doing its duty as told. The result was a complete victory for the *Mujahideen*. One hundred and ten officers/NCOs and three hundred and fifty enlisted men were captured. Brigadier Ahmaduddin and one Colonel of the Afghan army was killed[28]. The booty included a large amount of arms and ammunition. This was a well planned and well executed operation by the *Mujahideen*.

The Afghan army launched another attack on Masud's men in order to free the prisoners which they had taken during the last attack. The strength this time was much smaller than the previous offensives as the objective seemed to be only to recover more than a 100 Afghan officers and 350 Afghan soldiers who were in the hands of the 'counter revolutionaries'. One Soviet motor rifle regiment and two battalions of the Afghan army from 8 Infantry Division in Kabul took part in the action. They were assisted, as before, by heliborne troops. But overrunning territory is one thing and capturing prisoners in enemy hands alive is another. As expected no captives were released. All of them were killed. The *Mujahideen* put the blame on Soviet bombing. The Afghans say that they were murdered by the 'bandits'.

After four years (1981-1985) of fighting in the Panjsher valley the military situation remained the same. The guerrillas had not been eliminated and the security of highway 2 by the Kabul/Soviet forces had not been achieved. The net result was, however, in favour of the *Mujahideen* for it is said if the irregulars do not lose they win and if government troops do not win they lose. A stalemate continued in the valley till the withdrawal of Soviet troops.

Khost

Khost is the capital of the eastern border province of Paktia. It lies about 25 kilometres west of the Pak-Afghan border. It is situated on a plateau 40 kilometres long and about 45 kilometres wide at a height of 7000 feet. (2,058 metres). It is surrounded on all sides by hills 9,000 feet (2,646 metres) to 10,000 feet (2,940 metres) high. Two roads lead out from Khost. One to Gardez and on to Kabul which passes through a long mountain defile about 15 kilometres outside Khost. This is the main supply route for the Khost garrison. It can be blocked at several places because of the many gorges and narrow passes. Another road leads to the Waziristan tribal area in the Pakistani province of the Northwest Frontier. The airfield, which is often the only link to the capital, is within artillery and mortar range from *Mujahideen* controlled hills around Khost. Air traffic also can, therefore, be disrupted.

Khost has a population of about 100,000 who are mostly Durrani Pushtuns. Their main occupation is agriculture, petty trade and of course smuggling across the porous border to Pakistan - a mere stone's throw away.

Khost is garrisoned by about 9,000[29] Afghan troops and is the headquarters of 25 Afghan Division and 2 Afghan Border Brigade. The Soviets had never had troops in Khost, in fact there were no Soviet soldiers in the whole of the Paktia province. The struggle there was almost entirely between the Afghans themselves since 1983. The *Mujahideen* had their strongholds in the surrounding mountains, the important one being Jaji in the north, Maidan, Tarin and Zhawar in the south. The Zhawar *Mujahideen* base was composed of six well built caves, each about two average size bedrooms[30] located eight to ten kilometres from the Pakistani border. The base was tactically located as from there the freedom fighters could overlook a number of supply routes of the Khost garrison. It served as a link in the encirclement of Khost by the *Mujahideen*.

Khost had been under siege since 1983 making supply and reinforcements to the city by land extremely irregular as most of the time the roads leading into Khost were blocked by the *Mujahideen*. However supply by air continued to be possible although Soviet pilots dreaded flying into Khost because of the '*dushman*' occupying bases on the hills surrounding Khost. According to a Soviet pilot the airfield was packed with burnt out aircraft[31] making landing and take off from Khost difficult.

Jalaluddin Haqqani, the well known field commander, affiliated with Hizb-e-Islami (Khalis), made several attempts to capture Khost but found the defences too strong to breach. In July, 1985 he claimed to have gathered 10,000 *Mujahideen* from different 'political' parties the largest being from his own group to launch a coordinated offensive against the Khost garrison. However like all other such attempts this attack on the city of Khost did not succeed[32].

It was now the regime's turn to take the offensive. On 28 August a government force moved south from Khost to destroy the rebel outpost at Tani, 10 kilometres away, and if possible the larger post of Zhawar as well. However because of the stiff resistance put up by Haqqani's men the advance could not make much headway. A distance of only 20 kilometres was covered in 10 days. When the attackers reached close to the Zhawar base, which lies south of Khost just across the Pakistani border, several hundred Afghan refugees from different parties left their refugee camps inside Pakistan and came to the rescue of the Zhawar post.

The post was saved by the combined action of several *Mujahideen* parties, showing what unity and faith can achieve against heavy odds.

Jalaluddin Haqqani was pleased with his men's performance. They were confident now of beating back government forces. While Panjsher could claim the strategy of mobile defence, Zhawar stood out as an example of fortitude and courage of the defenders against an attack by superior forces.

Haqqani had organised his base at Zhawar as per proper military technique. There was an outer perimeter of defensive trenches connected together by tunnels. Several dug-in tanks (captured from the enemy in previous engagements) provided defensive fire. Anti-aircraft guns and surface to-air-missiles ensured protection from aerial strikes. Various trenches were linked by communication channels and arrangements for repair and maintenance with overhead cover had been made. Zhawar base, from where attacks on the supply column to Khost were made, became the show piece where foreign journalists and visitors were welcome.

Zhawar was gaining international significance and the Soviets had to do something about it not to let the *Mujahideen* there appear to be invincible. A major offensive against Zhawar was, therefore, planned and a force of about 12,000 was assembled from about five different infantry divisions. out of these 4,300 were Soviet and Afghan commandos specially trained to pierce fixed defences. Throughout March the troops concentrated in Khost under the command of Brigadier Abdul Ghafoor[33], who was on the staff of Major General Shahnawaz Tanai[34]. It was going to be one of the biggest offensive by the Afghan army.

On 3 April, 1986 the Soviet - Afghan forces bombed the Zhawar base. Immediately after the bombing specially trained counter-insurgency Soviet forces were landed by helicopters near the base to carry out its destruction. A total of 500 commandos participated in the attack. Their objective was to cut off all exit and entry points to the Zhawar base and then launch a major attack from the besieged city outwards. Brigadier Ghafoor used the hammer and anvil tactics. Another strong Soviet/Afghan force accompanied by hundreds of tanks and APCs (armoured personnal carriers) moved towards Zhawar base supported by air and artillery bombardment. The Kabul regime commandos,

however, ran into a *Mujahideen* patrol immediately on disembarking from their helicopters. Two of the MI-8s were destroyed and over half of the commandos killed. The other half surrendered to the freedom fighters. According to the *Mujahideen* over 200 commandos including 47 officers were taken prisoners[35]. while the Afghan forces advanced towards Zhawar the *Mujahideen* continued to rocket the Khost airfield delaying the air support needed by the government troops. A total of 2,500 rockets were fired by the Mujahids which kept the airstrip out of action for quite a while.

The first phase of the Zhawar operation by the Soviets was designed to capture and hold the base by the commandos for about five days till relieved by the garrison at Khost. This attacked failed due to the lack of proper intelligence and the inability of the main garrison to provide assistance whenever the commandos were surprised by a *Mujahideen* ambush.

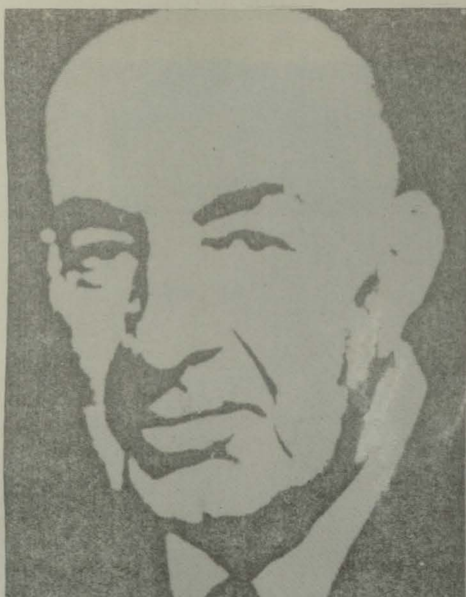
Although the Khost garrison could not save their commandos. they persisted in their attack on the Zhawar post by pounding it with massive air and artillery attacks. SU-25s dropped laser guided bombs into cave mouths killing many *Mujahideen*. (In one of these attacks Haqqani himself was injured and was sent to Pakistan for medical attention). The Russians continued to bomb the base till the weapons deployed in the base were totally destroyed. Seven thousand Soviet-Kabul forces attacked Zhawar after three weeks of heavy shelling. It was the heaviest bombardment by the Soviets in six years[36]. The *Mujahideen* had perforce to vacate the area.

On 20 April, 1986 the Afghan troops reached the Zhawar Base. It needed another four days of hand-to-hand fighting before the base was cleared. The caves and bunkers made by the *Mujahideen* were destroyed. Several other bases in the area were also taken. The loss of Zhawar Base was a set back to the freedom fighters as it was after eight years that Afghan troops could enter this very strongly defended *Mujahideen* base from where raids and rocket attacks were being carried out on Khost.

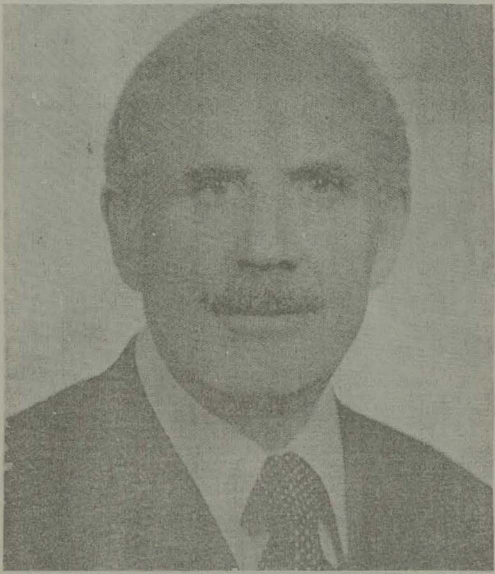
After another encounter in April, 1986 Brigadier General Arif, commander of 25 Infantry Division at Khost, claimed that the Afghan armed forces achieved another victory of wiping out 'bandits' from Zhawar where encasements were built by US, Pakistan and China. "US imperialists, Chinese frogs, Arab



King Mohammad Zahir Shah
Ruler of Afghanistan (1933-1973)



Prince Sardar Mohammad Daud
Prime Minister of Afghanistan (1953-1963)
President of Afghanistan (1973-1978)



Nur Mohammad Taraki
President of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan
(1978-1979)



Hafizullah Amin
President of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan
(September - December 1979)



Babrak Karmal
President of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan
(December, 1979 - May, 1986)



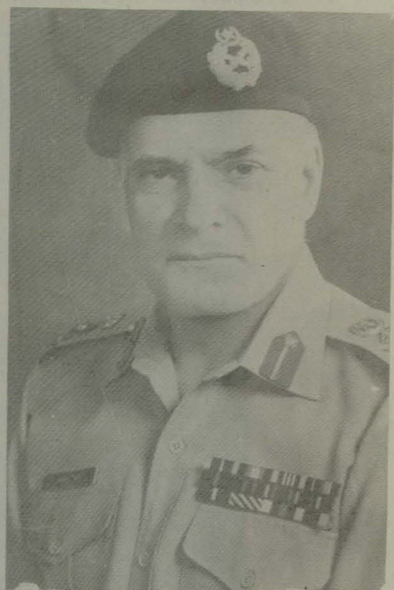
Dr. Najibullah
President of the Republic of Afghanistan (1986 - to-date)



General Mohammad Zia-ul-Haq
President of Pakistan (1977 - 1988)



Lt. Gen. Hamid Gul
Director General, Inter Services
Intelligence Directorate (1987-1989)



General Akhtar Abdur Rahman
Director General, Inter Services
Intelligence Directorate (1979-1987)

reactionaries and Pakistani traitors faced a defeat in Khost". said Brigadier Asif[37]. Kabul radio claimed in May that Kabul forces had destroyed 200 concrete trenches, killing 2,000 and wounding 400 counter revolutionaries at Zhawar fortress[38].

Independent sources put the *Mujahideen* casualties as over 1,000. Kabul radio said that "252 enemy fortifications 6,000 anti-tank mines and 12,000 anti-personnel mines were destroyed and that 2,000 'bandits' had been killed and 4,000 injured[39]. Guerrillas admitted to 250 being killed." Tass reported from Kabul that "guerrillas had abandoned the Zhawar Base and that large quantities of arms made in UK, USA, China and West Germany were siezed. Medals and awards were distributed at Khost for the courage shown by Afghan forces in clearing the Zhawar bases from the 'ugly existence of criminal elements'[40]. It only goes to prove that anti-guerrilla activities can succeed if the attackers are willing to pay the price, but to hold on to bases which have been captured and defend them against raids requires a disproportionate number of troops. Such outposts have, therefore, to be vacated by regular soldiers sooner or later only to be re-occupied by the defenders again.

Jalaluddin Haqqani, who controlled the insurgents in the Khost area, had been valiantly putting pressure on the Kabul/Soviet forces in the Khost sector. He, however, did not succeed in over running the Khost garrison which continued to receive its supplies and reinforcements by air and land from Kabul and Gardez. It was also reported by some sources that tribes living in Pakistan clandestinely provided food and ammunition to the Kabul regime garrison at Khost for large sums of money. (Khost was atlast captured by the *Mujahideen* in March, 1991).

Qandahar

It is comparatively easy for guerrillas to interdict convoys, ambush armoured columns, blow up ammunition dumps and disrupt normal life in and surround a city but to capture and hold it against superior forces is quite difficult if not impossible. Such was the situation in Afghanistan's second largest city since the communist took over power.

The province of Qandahar, in the southeastern part of Afghanistan has a common border with Pakistan. It is mostly flat

and open with a desert terrain. The provincial capital, also called Qandahar, is in the middle of an open plain some 100 kilometres north east of the Pakistani border town of Chaman in Baluchistan. It was the home of the Durrani Kings and is, therefore, also known as the 'Royal city'. The built up area is about 8 kilometres by 5 kilometres with the airport 25 kilometres away on the road to Kabul. The city is divided into the more open cantonment area and civil lines where most of the government offices are located and the congested city area with narrow winding streets overlooked by dilapidated double storey houses. This makes clandestine operations in this part of the town easier. The outskirts are less populated and provide places for strong points with good fields of fire. Qandahar had a population of about 200,000 most of whom were Durrani Pushtuns (Barakzais) with a sprinkling of Baluchis and Hazaras[41]. More than half of the people had left the city for safer places. The governor of Qandahar province was Noor-ul-Haq Ulumi a close ally of Najibullah[42].

The city is connected by a three lane highway to Kabul in the northeast, to the Pak-Afghan border in the south and to Herat in the northwest. Out of the hills that overlook Qandahar the Spin Boldak range on the southeast is the most prominent. It rises to a height of 7,000 feet (2,200 metres) and dominates the road leading to Qandahar from Chaman. A number of small villages surround Qandahar. These had been turned into outposts and strongholds by the *Mujahideen* and the Soviet/Kabul forces and had been the bone of contention in the ten years of fighting for the control of the city.

Qandahar was a disputed city between the *Mujahideen* and the Kabul government. It was the headquarters of II Afghan Corps which had under its command 15 Infantry Division and 7 Armoured Brigade both located in Qandahar and 17 Infantry Division in Herat about 600 kilometres northwest of the city[43]. The Soviet 346 Motorised Rifle Division was also located in Qandahar[44]. The air support being provided by the Soviet/Kabul air force base at Shindand 160 kilometres to the west. The defences of Qandahar were based on a chain of security posts in three consecutive rings. The inner most being within the city. The second ring linked the outskirts on all sides and the third 10 to 20 kilometres away connected the strongholds established in the outlying villages lying astride the approaches to Qandahar. Each security post outside the city was manned by a force of about 80 to

100 men, supported by tanks emplaced in the minefield belt around Qandahar[15].

The Soviet/Kabul forces initially established 60 such security posts around Qandahar to prevent the movement of counter revolutionaries within the city. Later these were reduced to 20 as mobility between posts increased due to the construction of a connecting road wide enough to permit easy movement of tanks and vehicles from one security post to another. A minefield belt had been established in the southern sector of the city with hull down tanks dug in between the minefields. The security posts were within the minefield to prevent being overrun by surprise *Mujahideen* attacks. The object of laying minefields was to prevent the residents of the city from supplying food and medicines to the anti-government posts outside the city.

The pattern of defensive and offensive operations in Qandahar was interesting. The inner core of Soviet/Kabul defences inside the city and cantonments was surrounded by a number of guerrilla strong points also inside the city. These *Mujahideen* strongholds in the city were in turn cordoned off by a ring of Soviet/Kabul security posts on the outskirts of the city supported by mines and dug in tanks. The area in between these was controlled by mobile security patrols. There was yet another concentric ring this time manned by the freedom fighters occupying dug outs in the neighbouring villages. There were thus four irregular broken chains in and around Qandahar manned alternately by Soviet/Kabul forces and the *Mujahideen* each played a hide and seek game for 10 years. Sometimes the Soviets besieged the city and the *Mujahideen* tried to lift the siege and sometimes it was the other way round with the communist troops trying to get through the cordon to reinforce their units inside Qandahar. To ensure a safe passage along the highways the Soviets levelled all villages and orchards within 50 yards on either side[16] of the roads leading into Qandahar to get longer fields of fire.

The guerrilla activities had been restricted to four areas: (1) establishing of guerrilla strongholds in the outlying districts along roads leading into Qandahar with the purpose of interdicting supplies and reinforcement reaching the Soviet/Afghan forces in the town; (2) constructing strong points on the outskirts of the city from where government forces could be harassed intermittently. The most important of these was at the Mohallajat

area in the north-western part of the city; (3) Headquarters and those buildings where Kabul/Soviet forces were housed were kept under artillery and rocket attacks to demoralise the Soviets and Afghan forces stationed there and (4) Qandahar airport was to be kept non-operational for as long as possible by subjecting it to rocket attacks from nearby strongholds with the aim of destroying aircraft and helicopters parked on the airbase.

Fighting in The Outlying Areas

The outer perimeter of defence established by the forces loyal to the government were usually of company strength supported by tanks and heavy weapons. They covered most of the approaches leading into Qandahar. Some of the security posts were so strongly held that it took six weeks for the *Mujahideen* to capture the first one.

Similarly the *Mujahideen* also had strongholds in the outlying areas of Qandahar which were quite well defended. It was from these bases that they fired their BM-12 multibarrel rocket launchers into Qandahar[17] - surprisingly with a fair amount of accuracy. These mobile weapons changed their location every so often to avoid retaliation.

Government troops supported by Soviet forces continued to attack *Mujahideen* bases in the Panjwai district, Shahwali Kota, Mianwand and Arghandab districts of Qandahar. On 9 February, 1987 approximately 2,500 Soviet and Afghan troops accompanied by 300 to 400 tanks established road blocks on the Chaman Qandahar axis to prevent supplies and weapons being sent to Qandahar from Pakistan[18]. While the Soviets blocked the route to Qandahar from the south, the *Mujahideen* blocked the road from Kabul in the north and so the cat and mouse game continued with no hope of lasting peace.

Fighting in The Outskirts

The *Mujahideen* continued to attack the security posts established by the Soviets just outside the city limits in order to provide gaps for themselves to be able to go in and get out of Qandahar with greater ease. The *Mujahideen* were strongly entrenched in the Mohallajat villages just outside Qandahar city. Inspite of heavy bombardment by the Soviet/Kabul air force the spirit of the Afghan resistance in this area was never broken. In one such attack 500 civilians of the area were killed but they

continued to provide shelter and assistance to the *Mujahideen*. Intense fighting in the suburbs of Qandahar frequently erupted. In one of the attacks 1,200 Afghan/Soviet troops tried to eliminate the resistance in the Mohallajat villages but failed after heavy losses. One hundred and fifty Afghan troops were killed and 21 tanks destroyed, fifteen Mujahids died in this particular action[49].

The biggest offensive launched by the *Mujahideen* in this sector was in November, 1987. An estimated 800 *Mujahideen* from more than 100 fighting units belonging to all seven parties launched an attack against all the Soviet/Kabul security posts. This according to the BBC correspondent, George Arney, was "a show of complete cooperation not known in the entire history of the war"[50]. The freedom fighters did capture some security posts but still no major break through could be achieved.

Fighting Inside Qandahar

Fighting in built up area is a very difficult operation requiring specialised training. The *Mujahideen* therefore inspite of being inside Qandahar city had not been able to systematically clear it of 'enemy' forces. The strength of the *Mujahideen* inside the city was claimed to be 4,500 under the command of Haji Latif[51]. The *Mujahideen* had established their own posts within the city which were not easily identified as during day they were ordinary citizens carrying out their normal work innocently. At night they moved out to plant a bomb here, blast a dump there, spray bullets on an army barrack or put fire to a fuel dump somewhere in the city. Whenever the Soviets would come to know of the existence of such a base within the city there would be massive retaliation. A proper fight would then ensue. The Shikarpur area of Qandahar city was one such area which was often attacked but more often than not the attacks were repulsed.

There were periods of inactivity but suddenly the calm was broken. Major General Mohammad Hakim, commander of the southern area, was quoted by Radio Moscow as saying "There was peace and calm in the vicinity of the Qandahar airport early morning. But silence is often deceitful in Afghanistan. Shelling by dacoits and explosion of grenades, bombs or mines can break the silence any moment. They are ambushing at night and setting fire to vehicles. They are laying mines in bazaars, shops and mosques"[52]. Kabul radio as usual blamed Pakistan for 'assisting counter revolutionaries' in their subversive activities.

Independent sources based in New Delhi confirmed that sections of Qandahar city had been liberated by the freedom fighters but they were not able to occupy and hold the area for long. Various parts of Qandahar city had come under the control of the *Mujahideen* only to be lost again.

There had been exaggerated claims from both side. *Mujahideen* were supposed to have 'seized' the city during the second week of April, 1981 - but it was during this period that General Abdul Qader, the minister of defence, visited the city. Similarly heavy bombardment by Soviet forces was reported to have destroyed the city but foreign journalists visiting Qandahar soon after did not find evidence of major destruction. However, what was clear was that *Mujahideen* in large numbers were present in the city and were capable of carrying out raids and harassing tasks against the Kabul regime forces.

The most important *Mujahideen* commander in the Province of Qandahar was Esmatullah Muslim, an ex Afghan army officer who had defected to the *Mujahideen* in June, 1978. He was able to gather around him about 5,000 *Mujahideen* and gave them a reasonable quantity of RPG-7 rocket launchers, 12.7 mm Chinese made machine guns and SAM-7 anti-aircraft missiles. Some of these were captured, some bought in Beirut while others were supplied by Egypt and CIA[53]. However, later he was won over by the Kabul regime and the *Mujahideen* had to fight against their own one time supporter. He, however, soon became his own master attacking both government and *Mujahideen* alike.

Mujahideen forces operating in Qandahar Province were mostly independent and did not belong to anyone particular group, there were some elements of Hizb-e-Islami and the Jamiat-e-Islami amongst them as well. They were also divided between the royalist and those who opposed the return of former King Zahir Shah. Najib played upon this division amongst the partisans in Qandahar. Mulla Malang a freedom fighter in Qandahar blamed Najib for creating differences between the *Mujahideen*[54]. The *Mujahideen* neither had the strength nor sufficient sophisticated weapons to liberate Qandahar. Their anti-government activities were not coordinated nor had they had any training for fighting in built up areas which is a very specialised operation of war. In twelve years of resistance against a communist regime they had not been able to organise a full

fledged uprising of the civilian population in that city or a mutiny amongst the Kabul forces stationed in Qandahar. Defections from the army had no doubt taken place but on the whole the formations and units of the Afghan army located there remained loyal to the government in power.

Being the second largest city of Afghanistan it was highly unlikely that the Soviets and their surrogates in Kabul would have allowed it to fall into the hands of the rebels. Even if the *Mujahideen* would have succeeded in forcing the government forces to evacuate the city it certainly would have been retaken by bringing in superior forces supported by all the air force they could muster.

The battle for the control of Qandahar city had been going on since the April '78 coup. The guerrillas trying to pierce the different perimeters of security and the government troops trying to plug the holes in them. Even after the withdrawal of the Soviet troops the *Mujahideen* were not able to overrun Qandahar. Forces loyal to Najibullah were strong enough to hold on to the city but not the outlying areas which still changed hands between the two opponents. Qandahar remained partly under the control of Najibullah's government supported by his loyal Afghan forces and partly in the hands of the *Mujahideen*. It was the only city in Afghanistan where the Afghans shared the same foodstalls by day and fought each other by night. The fall of Qandahar would have been a great morale booster for the anti-government forces but the stalemate continued.

In the midst of all this struggle German doctors were providing medical aid, amputating hands and legs and saving the lives of human beings. To them it mattered little if they were pro or anti-Najib.

Kunduz

After the Soviets began withdrawing their forces from Afghanistan the momentum of the *Mujahideen* activity increased. This was so, because they wanted to capitalise on their rising morale, having forced a superpower to retreat. They were also keen to take advantage of the twilight phase, when the Russians were leaving and Kabul forces were in the process of adjusting their positions to defend important cities, gaining control of a city would have given their particular party ascendancy over the other

Mujahideen contenders. With this in view rebel activities were stepped up around Jalalabad, Qandahar and Kabul. Smaller towns which could be more easily held were also besieged. One such was Kunduz in the northern province of Afghanistan with the same name.

Kunduz lies on the Russo-Afghan border. The main artery from the Soviet border town of Termez to Kabul runs through this province. The entire area is mountainous with peaks ranging between 15,000 to 20,000 feet (5,680 metres). The valleys are narrow and afforded good blocking positions to the insurgents. The slopes of the hills are wooded which provided cover and concealment. The population is mostly Tajik. The area falls under the control of professor Burhanuddin Rabbani's, Jamiat-e-Islami.

Kunduz was garrisoned by a brigade group of the Afghan army consisting of 1,500-2,000 men, probably part of the infantry division at Narin. An unspecified number of Sarondoy, a para military force, and a border brigade formed part of the defences of Kunduz. The 201 Soviet Motor Rifle Division was also stationed in the city[55], total strength of the defenders was about 12,000 troops. The security perimeter consisting of security posts extended well out of the town. Kunduz was also the forward base of a Soviet air assault regiment.

Mujahideen had been harassing the Kunduz garrison ever since the Saur Revolution by ambushing convoys, attacking government establishments in the city and eliminating isolated security elements. They had also been mining roads and approaches to Kunduz. The engineers of the 201 Motor Rifle Battalion were reported to have cleared 30,000 mines and explosives devices in Kunduz, Takhar and Badakshan. *Mujahideen* in Kunduz were somewhat cut off due to the mountainous nature of the terrain and being far away from the Pakistani border. They therefore did not receive as many weapons and ammunition as other *Mujahideen* groups did.

Killing of Soviet soldiers by the *Mujahideen* nearly always triggered Soviet reprisals. On 18 April, 1984 the *Mujahideen* captured twelve Soviet soldiers belonging to the 201 Motor Rifle Division. Instead of keeping them as prisoners of war and sending them back to the rear (a month-long journey on foot to the Pakistani border) they were all 'shot while trying to escape'[56]. The Soviets retaliated by mounting a major attack on Gor Tapa district

of Kunduz. *Mujahideen* admitted to the loss of 133 fighters, including their commander, belonging to the Hizb-e-Islami (Khalis group) and 250 civilians[57].

By August, 1988 the Soviets had withdrawn almost half of the 110,000 troops in Afghanistan in fulfillment of the gradual but front loaded procedure of the withdrawal of Russian soldiers. Most of the cities were now being protected by Afghan troops only. Soviet advisers with some elements of Soviet troops still remained in important key points along the routes of withdrawal. Kunduz city also had been vacated by the Red army by August except for some ground elements and air assault units for mobile offensive operations. It was a good opportunity for the freedom fighters to try and seize control of a provincial capital particularly one close to the Soviet border. The local *Mujahideen* commander had already been investing Kunduz for the past eight years. Numerous security posts had been won and lost in this period. Afghan soldiers from the Kunduz garrison had defected. Information about the defences of Kunduz had been obtained. Detailed knowledge of the interior of the city was already known to the *Mujahideen* who came from that area. Links had been established with some civil and military officials in the provincial capital. So when the *Mujahideen* attacked Kunduz city on 7 August they did not meet stiff resistance. A part of the garrison surrendered and other elements fled the city. Fierce fighting between Afghan *Mujahideen* and Kabul/Soviet troops took place. Thirty *Mujahideen* and 130 civilians were killed in the offensive. The *Mujahideen* captured 63 heavy machine guns and 1,600 light weapons[58].

The Soviets confirmed that half of their troops had vacated Afghanistan but there was confusion about who actually held the city of Kunduz. While *Mujahideen* claimed that they had overrun Kunduz Najib said that it had been retaken[59]. The *Mujahideen* were correct. The capture of Kunduz by the *Mujahideen* was a serious blow to the prestige of the Russians. Being a border town they did not want it to fall into the hands of the counter-revolutionaries who could use it as a base to disrupt the withdrawal of the Soviet troops along the Kabul - Termez highway. Kremlin also had not forgotten Hikmatyar's raid into Soviet territory in 1974 which conjured up fears of Islamic fundamentalism intruding into their Central Asian Muslim Republics.

For the *Mujahideen* it was a splendid victory obtained rather cheaply. It raised the morale of the *Mujahideen* because it was the first provincial capital to fall since the Soviet troops withdrawal began. It had an ill effect on the morale of the Afghan troops in the northern provinces. Kunduz could have become the headquarters of the liberated areas in the north. This could have helped them in obtaining greater military assistance channeled through the 7-Party Alliance in Peshawar. *Mujahideen* held on to Kunduz for the next ten days.

However Kunduz was too close to the Soviet border to be safe from a counter attack which came on 17 August. Afghan forces, assembled from 20 Infantry Division at Narin and 18 Infantry Division at Mazar-e-Sharif, attacked Kunduz after the Soviet aircraft, from airfields in the Soviet Union, bombed Kunduz almost out of existence. Later infantry troops of the Afghan army moved in to re-occupy what had become a ghost city.

Mrs. Philis Oakley, in her capacity as the spokeswoman for the US administration, complained against the Soviet Union that it had violated the Geneva Accord by using Soviet planes in a military operation to re-take the city of Kunduz. Information from US satellites over Central Asia indicated that atleast five bombing missions by Soviet aircraft, some based in the Soviet Union, had been carried out[60]. Tass did not deny this report and acknowledged that the Soviet bombers from Russians airfields were used to bomb rebel positions in Kunduz. They justified their direct military participation in the fighting in Kunduz by saying that there were still some small Soviet military units and civilians in that area which had to be protected from the rebels. Kunduz according to them was an area where evacuation had not yet been completed.

Radio Kabul blamed the *Mujahideen* for carrying out indiscriminate destruction of lives and property during their 'occupation' of the city. "The naked aggression of the American *Mujahideen* on Kunduz city recalled savages of Chengez and Halaku. The hirelings of the American imperialism did not spare even the old women and children, looted houses, set them on fire, burnt mosques and the Holy Quran" said Radio Kabul. Later Dr. Najibullah in his speech to the National Assembly at Kabul speaking about the fighting in Kunduz said "The wounds inflicted by the Kunduz incident will continue for a long time. We cannot

bring back the martyrs. Incidents like Kunduz should not be repeated"[61].

While the Kabul regime exaggerated the wounds inflicted by the *Mujahideen* to gain political mileage, independent foreign journalists told this author that the *Mujahideen* in Kunduz did indulge in looting and unnecessary killing. This evoked a certain amount of bitterness amongst both the civilian population and the likely defectors in the Afghan army against their 'saviours'.

Herat

The province of Herat lies on the northwestern border of Afghanistan close to the Iranian border. It straddles the main highway to the Soviet Union from Qandahar and contains the important air base of Shindand. Unlike other areas of Afghanistan the terrain around Herat and its adjoining provinces of Farah and Nimroz is flat and open. The majority of the people in the Herat province are Tajiks, Uzbeks and Aimeks. The few Pushtuns that are found there are also Darri speaking. The *Mujahideen* in Herat do not have the benefit of proximity to supply bases as the main weapon supply from Western sources comes through Pakistan. Iran, was engaged in a life and death struggle with Iraq, and could ill afford to spare large stocks of arms for the Afghan *Mujahideen*.

The local *Mujahideen* commander was Ismael Khan who belonged to Professor Rabbani's Jamiat-e-Islami. He claimed to have control over 80 percent of the fighters in this area. Some elements of Gulbadin Hikmatyar's Hizbe Islami and Nabi Mohammadi's Harakat were also present but according to Mark Urban, defence correspondent of the Independent newspaper, they did not prove to be very reliable fighters and their local commanders deserted to the Afghan authorities[62].

The tactics used by the *Mujahideen* in the open country around Herat were different to those fighting in the mountainous north eastern area. Here mobility and movement at night paid higher dividends. Luckily for Ismael the Kabul regime forces were inadequate to control the area. The Afghan formation responsible for the security of northwest Afghanistan was 17 Infantry Division with its headquarters at Herat. It was supported by three other independent brigades and some Sarandoy battalions. The force was, however, responsible for four other provinces as well. Thus the area of responsibility was much larger than what their

resources permitted. Besides, defections, casualties and initial shortages had brought the strength of the total force down from 18,000 to 6,000. The Kabul regime forces were very thinly disposed giving Ismael and his men greater freedom to operate. The estimated strength of the Soviet forces (12,000)[63] was larger than the Kabul regime units in this area and remained a force to be reckoned with.

Inspite of this the *Mujahideen* continued to harass the Soviet/Kabul force in and around Herat. The *Mujahideen* are reported to have executed sixty PDPA officials in January, 1982[64]. As a reprisal a major offensive was launched by 17 Infantry Division and Soviet 5 Guards Motor Rifle Division. They claimed to have killed 2,200 rebels and 'eliminated the remnants of the rebel bands'[65].

Ismael, however, remained effective and further strengthened his fighting groups by organising them into conventional fighting units. He formed them into 'battalions' of four companies each and 'regiments' of five battalions each. Though referred to as battalions and regiments their strength and equipment was far less than what is generally expected in modern armies. The total strength of Ismael's *Mujahideen* group was around 5,000 with only 1,000 hard core, full time fighters under commander Alauddin. By 1984 Ismael had built up a force of 12,000 men[66]. High level bombing by the Soviets forced the civilians living there to leave the area reducing the population considerably. Consequently Ismael was deprived of all the logistic support which he used to receive from them. This rendered him somewhat ineffective momentarily.

Ismael continued to carry out rocket attacks on the Shindand air base and his *Mujahideen* remained active in subversive activities. A major explosion at the air base destroyed 12 to 20 aircraft in June, 1985. It was not clear whether it was an operation by Ismael's men from outside or by dissatisfied Afghan soldiers inside Shindand air base. Whatever be the case heavy fighting continued inside Herat city throughout 1985.

In January, 1986 Kabul regime forces planned a major offensive against the *Mujahideen* operating in and around Herat. Elements of the regular Afghan army supported by the Sarandoy, border troops and Revolution Defence Groups combined their efforts to attack the *Mujahideen*. Afghan army's Colonel Asak

reported proudly after the engagement "I assure you that the enemy's combat capability has been eliminated for ever"[67]. But little did he know that Ismael and his men had slipped away again. Within a few hours of his radio broadcast his headquarters was rocketed which must surely have embarrassed him. The tactics of digging tunnels leading from one house to another from one corner of the city to the next made them an elusive target. Soviet troops often forced the *Mujahideen* into a dead-end street only to find them disappear from below a house to another locality.

Soviet Forces in Afghanistan

Strength

The strength of the Soviet limited military contingent at the time of entry into Afghanistan was about 30,000 to 35,000 which was soon raised to 80,000 to 85,000, the maximum total at any one time reaching 115,000. Its deployment was confined to the major cities with the largest concentration being at Kabul and the two air bases at Bagram and Shindad. They were supported by 300 aircraft including 600 helicopters and 1,420 tanks. Afghanistan was divide into 7 military regions each headed by a senior party official and a Soviet general with 1,000 elite Soviet commandos at his disposal[68]. They were able to provide small lightly equipped units for mobile operations in mountainous terrain.

Organisation

The Soviet sent their 'limited contingent' into Afghanistan with the sole purpose of propping up a tottering socialist regime Judging from the strength and structure of the forces used initially it does not appear that they were properly organised for the type of military operation they would get into when trying to achieve their political objective. They had moved their formations and units as they were, without adapting them to the terrain and type of opposition they were likely to meet in Afghanistan. Fighting against an equally powerful enemy in an all out war extending to several theatres of operations is one thing, engaging small bands of devoted guerrillas fighting on favourable terrain on their home ground is quite a different matter. With the largest conventional army at their disposal they found themselves in a quandary because they had not tailored, their troops to fight the war in Afghanistan. When discussing the organisation of the

Soviet limited military contingent which went into Afghanistan with a senior Soviet military officer in Moscow it was explained that the Soviet army leadership were not sure of the reaction of President Carter. They had to be prepared in case the United States used their air force from the aircraft carriers in the Gulf to deal with the Soviet invasion. Hence the need for standard Soviet formations.

Training

The Russians brought with them some standard units and formations designed to fight against modern armies but other formations relied on making up the strength of their divisions by calling up reservists from the Turkestan Military District. These Tajik and Uzbek recruits had only 4 to 6 weeks of training before they were sent into Afghanistan to carry out 'anti-terrorist' activities for which they had received no training. The Soviets later decided not to send untrained conscripts to Afghanistan. A proper training establishment was put up in the Turkestan Military District which was the home of 280 Training Division[69]. Drivers and gunners got five to six months of 'pre-Afghanistan' training. According to some of the trainees they built models of Afghan villages and then under cover of the infantry combat vehicles they attacked them and razed them to the ground. They were trained for night operations, for hand-to-hand fighting and in clearing strong points and fortresses. Bomb disposal and mine clearance became part of the specialised training being now imparted.

Logistics

The Soviets also began to develop the infrastructure needed for providing logistic support to a modern army. A permanent bridge over the Oxus at Termez replaced the pontoon bridge which had been used by the invading forces. A fuel pipe-line was laid from the Soviet-Afghan border to Pule-Khumri (40th Army's main supply base) to reduce the use of fuel tankers on vulnerable highways[70]. The number of helicopters was increased manifold to give greater flexibility to their troop movement.

Tactics

The military tactics followed initially was to move with great speed using a combination of air and ground forces to occupy the major cities and air bases and to create a shock effect. The Soviets wanted to present a 'fait accompli' before the United States and

neighbouring countries reacted to their military moves. Having achieved the desired results the Russians were to withdraw to key points and let the Afghan army deal with the counter-revolutionaries in the outlying areas.

Low Profile

Throughout 1980, therefore, the Soviet army generally remained confined to the cities, defending vital installations, guarding headquarters and communication centres, protecting air bases against ground attacks. They kept a low profile keeping out of sight as much as possible. Most of the patrolling, therefore, was done at night. They had, however, to contend also with those troops within the Afghan army who were still loyal to Hafizullah Amin and were putting up resistance against the Soviet forces. There was, therefore, occasionally direct confrontation between Soviet troops and the Afghan army in several places. It was at this stage that large defections from the Afghan armed forces took place. This, along with the casualties suffered at the hands of the Russians in the initial stages of the invasion, led to, almost, the complete disintegration of the Afghan army.

Independent Actions

Realising that the depleted Afghan army was not capable of dealing with the insurgency the Soviets changed their role in Afghanistan from protection to active participation. In the late 1980s the Soviets began to crush the resistance independently. Though they achieved some success they found that they began to lose the cooperation of the common man whose hatred for the '*Shooravi*' increased as they were now blamed directly for the killings of their brethren and for the destruction of their property. Reprisals against the Russians also increased as the *Mujahideen* began to take their revenge. Casualties began to mount. A change of tactics again became necessary.

Joint Operations

Since the Afghan forces alone could not suppress the resistance and the Russians operating independently were proving to be counter-productive it was decided in 1981 that Soviet and Afghan troops would operate jointly. But by now the shock effect had died down and the determination to get rid of the foreigners and their communist Afghan supporters had hardened further. In fact the period 1980-1981 was very much in favour of the *Mujahideen*.

They had the initiative but they were unable to exploit it because of disunity and poor organisation.

Full Scale Offensives

1982 saw another shift in the Soviet military doctrine in Afghanistan. They had been there now for over two years without being able to show much success. So the answer seemed to be to use greater force to crush the resistance. Major offensives were planned by the Soviet/Kabul forces against *Mujahideen* held territory to wipe them out once for all. The Panjsher valley operations, the attack on *Mujahideen* strongholds near Herat and the clearing of the Shomali area were carried out. These attacks were properly planned, well coordinated and pushed through relentlessly till the objective was achieved. They were preceded by heavy aerial bombardment which softened up the resistance, heliborne troops were used to block exit and withdrawal routes and mechanised columns moved up providing the hammer against the anvil. Such World War II tactics proved effective against well defended positions. But it was not of much avail against the *Mujahideen* since they were elusive. In the words of a Soviet soldier: "you shoot but you never see anyone or anything to shoot at"[71].

A secret agreement between USSR and Afghanistan gave away Wakhan to the Soviets. Wakhan came under the Pamir Military District in Murghat, Tajikistan, which was part of the Southern Strategic Centre at Tashkent and not under 40th Army Headquarters at Termez[72]. About 4,000 Soviet soldiers occupied the area quietly and unobtrusively. The *Mujahideen* did not have the ability to force the Soviets out of Wakhan.

Use of Specialised Troops

By 1983 the Soviet soldiers began receiving better equipment. Bullet proof jackets were issued. The AK-47 was replaced by the newer AK-74 which became the standard issue. The new 5.45 mm round shattered the body more than the conventional 7.62 mm bullet. Special anti-sniper squads were formed to pinpoint sniper fire and hand held flame throwers (AGS-17) were issued to flush out the 'miscreants' from their caves from a safe distance[73].

But the resistance against the Kabul regime continued. It became obvious to the Soviets that fighting against partisans in difficult terrain required specialised forces. Consequently air

assault forces (VDV) were inducted whose task was to land behind enemy lines and cut off the routes of withdrawal while the main attack was being put against *Mujahideen*-held strongholds. They were also dropped by helicopters on high ground to work their way downwards to 'marry up' with Soviet/Kabul forces operating in the valley. Sometimes they were to surround inaccessible villages and force them to surrender. These VDV troops were highly mobile carrying light but effective weapons. After completion of their task they were airlifted back to base.

The other type of special troops employed by the Russians were the spetznatz. Seven to eight spetznatz battalions were formed[74]. They were based at Qandahar and Shindand and controlled by the Soviet Military Intelligence (GRU). Their mission was to gather information, ambush guerrilla bands and spread disunity amongst the *Mujahideen* often fighting in clothes worn by the freedom fighters to give the impression that were from a rival group.

Interdiction

The Soviets had been in Afghanistan for over five years but they had not been able to subdue the resistance movement. They blamed the United States, China, Saudi Arabia and Egypt for supplying weapons to the terrorists in Afghanistan. Pakistan was condemned for training the rebels and for being a conduit for the weapons flowing into Afghanistan. The Kremlin demanded that the border be sealed by Pakistan to which President Zia coolly replied. "It is virtually impossible for the Pakistan army to seal off a very porous 2,400 kilometres border with Afghanistan. The Russians are welcome to try and do so since they are already in Afghanistan". There are over 300 passes along the Durand Line through which people could infiltrate either way. All of them had to be blocked by day and by night to be able to prevent movement through them.

Moscow's policy in 1985 was an attempt to do so[75]. They carried out intense bombardment on possible supply routes along the Pak-Afghan border. Air and ground violations of Pakistani territory increased. *Mujahideen* strong points along the supply lines from Pakistan were attacked. They tried to close the border with Pakistan, by dropping millions of PFM-1 butterfly anti-personnel mines on the roads leading from Pakistan into

Afghanistan and also around cities held by the Soviet/Kabul forces[76].

Search and Destroy

Not content with such an interdiction strategy the Soviets extended their area of operations in 1986 using air mobility to reach out to far flung areas. The new strategy of search and destroy using helicopters to drop troops behind 'enemy' lines was adopted by General Michael Zeitsev, the newly appointed commander of the Soviet forces in Afghanistan[77], This led to an escalation of the conflict. The biggest offensive of the now seven-years 'war' came in April, 1986 when nearly 15,000 men of the invading army supporting an equal number of still loyal Afghan soldiers attacked the strongly held *mujahideen* 'fortress' of Zhawar on the Pakistani border (a detailed account of this battle has been covered earlier). Such missions took the Russians into far flung areas of Afghanistan but all they could achieve was temporary gains by eliminating a few posts of the partisans.

Scorched Earth Tactics

The *Mujahideen* were receiving considerable support from their brethren inside Afghanistan, who provided them with food and shelter. In order to prevent the local inhabitants from doing so the Soviets began destroying the houses and crops. They systematically devastated the countryside to force the people to leave their homes. Thus depriving the *Mujahideen* of the protection and support of their kith and kin.

By now Gorbachev was getting tired of the Afghanistan war which he called a 'bleeding wound' and a 'mistake'. From now on the military dimension began to be played down and serious negotiations began in Geneva between Pakistan and the Kabul regime for a time table for the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan.

Afghan Armed Forces

The total strength available to the DRA was 35 to 40,000 regular Afghan army; 7,000 in the Afghan air force; about 50,000 in the tribal militia, regular armed police, KHAD secret service and the civil defence bringing the grand total to around 97,000 in 1980[78].

Najibullah acknowledged that the strength of the Afghan army

had reduced substantially after ten years of counter insurgency operations. The status of the Afghan army was defined by him in January, 1988 as low level as regards completion of the combat units and detachments; low level also in weapon and combat training; lack of serious mobilisation efforts; weak theoretical and practical preparedness and slow rate of activity of political organs, party and youth organisations in the armed forces for boosting the militancy of the army. The Afghan President went on to say "these defects have created obstacles and do not give the opportunity to achieve the necessary superiority over the enemy"[79].

To try and suppress the resistance movement Najibullah also raised a para military force called the Sarandoy. Its strength was around 30,000 and was equipped with light and heavy weapons, making it almost as effective as regular army units[80]. Tribal brigades were also organised but their loyalties were doubtful. A specially trained force, called Joz Jani Militia, was created which received its training in the USSR. These troops were to ambush the supply columns for the *Mujahideen*. They were to carry out subversive attacks on *mujahideen* ammunition dumps, to deny reinforcements reaching them and in coordination with regular Afghan forces cut off their routes of withdrawal when under attack. In order to increase the strength of the depleted Afghan army, the Kabul regime announced voluntary call-up of school levers; lowered the conscription age from 21 to 20 years and made conscription compulsory for all men above twenty years of age; raised the rates of pay for the armed forces; redrafted those on the reserve list and extended the tenure of active duty[81].

The Afghan army had never been a force to be reckoned with even in the best of times. President Daud did raise the efficiency of his army and air force by organising them into regular units and formations and, with the assistance of Moscow, he equipped them with reasonably modern weapons. The army had World War II tanks and guns and the air force a squadron of MiG-19s. The Afghan armed forces were far inferior in weapons and training to the armies of its neighbouring countries, Iran and Pakistan. Thousands of officers and men did receive their military training in the USSR along with a heavy dose of ideological indoctrination. Some came back filled with socialist ideas. Others must have been disappointed at the loss of freedom which the Afghan's so cherish in their personal affairs.

Those newly converted to communist ideas began to make inroads into the armed forces as well. Unfortunately each of the two factions of the PDPA tried to win over the officers and men in uniform thus destroying the unity of the armed forces. Frequent arrests and extermination of senior army and air force officers by those in power in Kabul gave rise to a polarisation within the forces and to animosity against the government.

No army is ever happy to shoot its own citizens more so if it is used to suppress opposition to an unpopular regime. Taraki and Amin employed all the forces at their disposal to put thousands of opponents in jail and to eliminate the diehards including respected religious leaders. Sympathy for those who were being brutally disposed off existed amongst the armed forces as well and large scale defections began taking place. During and after the Soviet invasion the rate of defections increased manifold. Since the defectors came over to the *Mujahideen* with their arms and ammunition there was an initial shortage of these as well. The Soviets did make up the shortages in military hardware and even provided some modern weapons but the replacement of manpower was not easy even after massive recruitment drives which included under-age conscription.

The morale of the Afghan army was also not very high as years of continued fighting against their own brethren had, taken its toll. Engaging in a short decisive war against one's enemy, howsoever destructive in human lives, does not sap the morale that much as a prolonged low-intensity conflict against an elusive group of one's own community. The arrival of Soviet troops helped to put some steel in their backs but no one likes to be dependent on crutches for too long. The presence of foreigners down to company and platoon level and working under their direction was not a very happy state of affairs.

Afghan officers who defected from their units and headquarters were bitter against the Russians because of their presence in every department of the Ministry of Defence and in all higher and lower formations of the Afghan armed forces. According to them all written orders had to be counter-signed by the Soviets. All Afghan military persons including general officers were searched when entering the ministry of defence building. Even Najib was unhappy on the very large number of Russian advisers in Afghanistan. In an interview with Boris Pyadechev,

chief editor of International Affairs, Moscow, he is reported to have remarked. "There is a Russian adviser even in the slaughter house". He also described humorously a situation in the cabinet meetings where according to him each minister was accompanied by a Soviet adviser who took their seats behind them. As the discussion progressed the ministers went to the rear and the Russians occupied the front rows[82].

It is no wonder, therefore, that whole units and formations defected and joined the *Mujahideen* in the first few years of the Soviet occupation. However, the hard core in the Afghan armed forces remained loyal to Karmal and Najib and as more and more Soviet weapons arrived they managed to gradually improve the effectiveness of their armed forces. Najib's policy of not challenging the *Mujahideen* in the countryside and concentrating his forces for the defence of major cities paid dividends.

Casualties and Losses

In the 11 years of struggle for power inside Afghanistan more than one and half million people were killed. Another seven million were rendered homeless. The Afghans lost 9 percent of their population. This is a very high figure when compared to losses even in World War II where USSR lost 8.6 percent and Poland only 6 percent of their population[83]. Half of the total Afghan population was killed, maimed or forced into exile. Total Soviet losses amounted to 13,833 killed 34,473 wounded and 311 captured or missing[84]. The Afghan armed forces suffered 58,951 casualties. Another 116,589 Afghan armed forces personnel were wounded. The *Mujahideen* had to sacrifice 55,157 lives 17,065 were wounded and 16,304 were missing or taken prisoner[85]. The destruction to houses, roads, schools, hospitals and other infrastructure had been assessed as more than $2 billion. Millions of unrecorded mines had been left. SIPRI estimated that the Russians were spending $3 billion per year on the Afghan conflict[86]. Premier Nikolai Ryzkov admitted to spending Roubles 5 billion ($7.58 billion) per year.

Equipment losses amounted to more than $22 billion[87]. Henry Bradsher, a well known journalist and writer on Soviet affairs, estimated the military cost as 3 million to 4 million dollars daily which raises the bill for the Soviet adventure into Afghanistan to $81 billion[88].

Table - 3

CASUALTIES - RUSSIAN FORCES

Year	Killed (total)	Offrs
1979	86	10
1980	1484	199
1981	1298	189
1982	1948	238
1983	1446	210
1984	2343	305
1985	1868	273
1986	1333	216
1987	1215	212
1988	759	117
1989	53	10
	13,833	1,979

Source: *Tass 25 May, 1988; Figures handed over to the author by the Institute of Oriental Studies, Moscow.*

Table - 4

CASUALTIES-KABUL REGIME FORCES

Year	Killed	Wounded	Missing/Captured
1980	9051	10087	3187
1981	3303	8323	2341
1982	2885	7819	500
1983	3408	9242	1327
1984	3353	9011	432
1985	3690	8898	556
1986	5772	11876	1162
1987	6229	12786	986
1988	10127	16529	3809
1989	11133	22018	2945
1990	7977 *	-	-
1991 (Jan-May)	1628 *		
	68,556	**116,589**	**17,245**

Source: Intelligence sources compiled from *Afghanistan Report June, 1990 to January, 1991*

Table - 5

CASUALTIES-MUJAHIDEEN

Year	Killed	Wounded	Missing/Captured
1980	9102	1155	4165
1981	10207	1342	2331
1982	4005	1002	1768
1983	3110	2113	1936
1984	5121	1035	1230
1985	4780	852	979
1986	3562	883	780
1987	2037	1093	580
1988	4181	2407	875
1989	9052	5183	1660
1990	1415 *	-	-
1991 (Jan-May)	266 *		
	56,838	17,065	16,304

Source: *Intelligence Sources*
Compiled from Afghanistan Reports July, 1990 to June, 1991.

Causes of Soviet Military Failure

Normally a better equipped army and numerically superior to the adversary usually carries the day but there are numerous examples in military history where a smaller force has successfully resisted and even won against a much larger and better armed enemy. In the battle of Badar the Prophet Mohammad (Peace be upon Him) with only 313 followers defeated non-Muslim army three times their strength. The Afghan tribesmen forced 21,000 British soldiers to retreat in 1842 killing all but one. The citizens of Leningrad held out for 900 days against the far superior Germans and forced them to lift the siege of their city in 1943. The Vietnamese compelled the 500,000 US troops to leave their country in 1975.

The reason why the Soviet armed forces could not suppress the insurgency, which they had planned to do in a matter of months, were several: (1) they under estimated the strength and fighting spirit of the *Mujahideen*; (2) their own armoured forces were neither tailored nor initially equipped for fighting in a mountainous country which lacked a communication infrastructure; (3) the terrain favoured guerrilla actions and made concentration of forces at the point of attack difficult. Tanks and heavy guns were not that effective as they would have been in the plains; (4) their cause in Afghanistan was based on a forced doctrine not convincing enough to the common soldier while on the contrary the *Mujahideen* were engaged in a *Jehad* and were fighting for their independence against a godless enemy; (5) the Russians initially got little support from the depleted and defection-ridden Afghan army; (6) the majority of the Afghan people hated the presence of Russian troops in the country and hence sided with the *Mujahideen*; (7) as time went by the *Mujahideen* received better and more sophisticated weapons which raised the cost of sustaining the war in Afghanistan; (8) the *Mujahideen* had the advantage of sanctuaries in Iran and Pakistan; (9) the Soviets were not prepared to escalate the conflict by bombing these sanctuaries or engaging them in hot pursuit; (10) Kremlin was not willing to induct more forces into Afghanistan although they had realised that the present strength was inadequate to quell the insurgency and (11) junior officers in the Soviet armed forces did not enjoy the freedom of taking initiatives-so necessary in small unit actions.

Benefits of The Afghan War to The Soviet Armed Forces

The Soviet armed forces, however, got battle-field experience in fighting limited wars in under-developed countries with varying terrain conditions. Assuming a one-year assignment for the Russian soldiers in Afghanistan a total of one million Russian soldiers underwent battle inoculation. That has made the conventional Russian forces that much more experienced. Moscow was also able to try some new weapons under battle-field conditions.

New military tactics were tried out to deal with counter insurgency. Some succeeded and some not. The heliborne special units and armoured infantry combination proved valuable. Mobile air assault regiments tried out their technique under the fire of a live enemy. Mine clearing operations were practiced and new equipment developed. Drills for convoy protection and establishment of security posts were formalised and perfected. A cartful of military manuals for handling low-intensity conflicts can now be written for their military schools based on the experience gained in the longest continuous war the Soviets have fought after World War II.

Others Also Benefitted

The United States also tested their Stingers, the British their Blowpipes, the French their Milans and the Chinese their long range missiles in an operational environment. The arms bazaar benefitted by the billions of dollars of military equipment bought by the CIA for the Afghan *Mujahideen*.

Strength and Weaknesses of The Mujahideen

The Afghan *Mujahideen* were rightfully proud of having achieved 'the miracle of the century'. Those emotionally involved in the conflict emphasized the fact that a handful of Mujahids with a deep faith in Islam forced a superpower to re-trace its steps. There is no doubt that the courage, determination and the independent spirit of the Afghans played a major role in the withdrawal of the Russians from Afghanistan. No amount of weapons, however sophisticated they may be, can defeat the enemy if the will power to do so is not present. The Afghans displayed their well known characteristics in their hour of trial. Bravery in battle; a commitment to avenge blood (*badal*); a fatalistic attitude to life which gives them the courage to face the

enemy with impunity, a deep faith in Islam, all helped in keeping up their determination to fight on inspite of the very heavy odds against them.

The Afghan character which includes *meranah* (manhood); *isteqamat* (persistence); *sabat* (steadfastness); *ghayrat* (defence of property and honour); *namus* (defence of women) was also instrumental in keeping the resistance against the Soviets and their clients alive. An independent spirit which does not permit subjugation to a foreigner or interference by an outsider in their area of domain proved to be both their strength and their weakness. Strength, when fighting against an enemy, weakness, when it came to protecting their perceived individual independence even at the sacrifice of a common cause.

Internal Rivalry

Unlike nation states where the country comes first Afghans think more about protecting sub-regional interests and achieving ascendency over a rival tribe than about the interest of the whole nation. Internal rivalry not only amongst those who were based in Peshawar or Tehran but also amongst the field commanders was the major weakness in the Afghan resistance movement. This 'war of brothers' weakened their efforts considerably. Almost all independent correspondents reported this failing. Numerous instances of fighting between the guerrillas took place - not by accident but intentionally either over control of territory, distribution of weapons, tribal feuds or just hot temper on the spur of the moment. With trigger happy-Afghans an insult, injury or perceived wrong must be avenged even if it takes a hundred years.

Reports of rebel groups joining together to fight other rebels were often seen in the international press e.g: "Two commanders of Harakat killed in an ambush, by Hizb"[89]. "Thirty Jamiat Islami fighters killed by Hikmatyar's men at Takhar"[90]. The Hizb-e-Islami announce their intention not to cooperate any more with other groups[91]. "Rival resistance groups are battling each other despite nominal alliance of their parties"[92]. A letter was purported to be written by a prominent Afghan rebel leaders stating that weapons should be seized from a particular rival group and the Russians informed about their whereabouts if they did not give up their arms. This was later denied[93]. Such news items appearing in the press indicated the seriousness of the issue.

Lack of Leadership

Because of the absence of a Che Guavara, or a Ho Chi Minh a common strategy to continue the conflict to its logical conclusion could not be developed. There was no organised headquarters which could plan and execute coordinated operations against the enemy. The command and control structure was totally missing initially. It was built up later in the shape of the ministry of defence in the Afghan Interim Government (AIG). But it soon became a government on paper only with no one to give orders to. This resulted in no clear cut policies, no clear cut orders to the various field commanders and even if orders were given they were hardly obeyed.

Insufficient Training

The other weakness amongst the freedom fighters was their lack of training. Initially in the fighting that was not much of a hindrance as they were quite accustomed to handling the old British Lee-Enfield rifle or the World War II machine gun. Even small and medium range mortars were not a problem. But as more and more sophisticated weapons came into the hands of the *Mujahideen* they needed to undergo proper training not only in their use but also in their maintenance. This required a certain level of literacy which was totally absent.

Training camps had no doubt been established but proper training of units and sub-units in battle procedures, camouflage and concealment, use of wireless codes, defence and attack of strong points was not carried out. Clearance and laying of mines and fighting in built-up-areas was hardly practiced. Only rudimentary training seems to have been given to the Afghan *Mujahideen* at the 'battle schools'. Faith in Islam, hatred for the '*shuravi*' and their supporters and a willingness to sacrifice their life for the honour of their tribe were greatly admirable qualities but unnecessary loss of life and achievement of their goal with less cost could have been obtained if they were properly trained to fight a guerrilla war under modern conditions. No attempt was made to convert the irregulars into a properly organised conventional army on the lines of the Khmer Rouge. Perhaps it did not suit the host country.

Inability to Operate Far from Home Base

The other reason for not being able to muster adequate

strength where needed was the strong allegiance which the *Mujahideen* had to their own turf. With few exceptions the partisans tended to remain in their own respective areas and were hesitant to go far out from their villages to participate with other groups in major offensives requiring the concentration of a large number of fighters.

Supply of Weapons

The major factor which influenced the effectiveness or otherwise of the *Mujahideen* was the supply of weapons. Whoever got the most and the best put up a good show. Those who were deprived of the much needed military hardware did not do so well. The perceived inequalities in the distribution and the preference shown to some groups over the others led to a great deal of bitterness amongst the leaders in Peshawar and also amongst the field commanders. The Stinger and the Blowpipe proved very effective against air attacks to which the *Mujahideen* earlier on had no answer but they were not available in sufficient quantities. No defence against high level bombing was available to them hence maximum casualties were suffered due to aerial attacks.

Brigadier Rehmatullah Safi, chief military adviser to the *Mujahideen* groups besieging the city of Khost, told one of the foreign journalists that his fighters needed 'mine detectors, walkie talkies and medical aid[94] to make his *Mujahideen* more effective.

Poor Communications

The French Milan anti-tank missile proved useful against enemy armour. The mines halted several tank attacks on *Mujahideen* strongholds. The long range rockets, provided by the Chinese, were quite effective when fired accurately. The multi-barrel rocket launchers and light artillery produced devastating fire power when needed. But use of modern weapons needed a certain amount of communication infrastructure which was absent in Afghanistan. Heavy weapons had to be mule or shoulder carried over difficult mountainous terrain. In some cases it took three days to provide the much needed ammunition. Weapons alone were not enough mobility was also required.

Weather Conditions

Severe weather conditions during the winter months were instrumental in reducing the level of military activities in

Afghanistan. This affected both the Soviet/Kabul forces and the *Mujahideen* but more so the latter as moving on horses or on foot or even on vehicles over snow-covered valleys and peaks was quite difficult. The fighting season, therefore, was generality confined to late spring, summer and early autumn. During every winter the Russians and their comrades in Kabul got an opportunity to rebuild their stocks without serious interference.

A Safe Haven

The strength of the *Mujahideen* lay in an inborn resistance to outside interference; a built-in hatred for the '*Shuravi*'; a fragmented tribal society which could not all be won over by the enemy at the same time; a tough and hardy way of life and a safe haven to fall back to for rest and relief. The last factor being so important that some cynics said that it is not the Afghans that were fighting a war for Pakistan but it was Pakistan that was providing the Afghans the wherewithals for continuing their struggle against the Kabul regime. The Mujahids certainly had the undaunted support of late General Zia-ul-Haq, but they also had the financial backing of Muslim countries, the military aid of the United States, China and Egypt, the humanitarian assistance of European countries and the overwhelming political and moral support of the United Nations. All this certainly helped in the success of their struggle against the foreign occupation of their war-torn country. But without Pakistan's acquiescence neither the foreign powers nor the Afghans could have forced the Russians out of Afghanistan.

Results of The Liberation Struggle

All said and done and inspite of the weaknesses no one can deny the laurels due to each and every Mujahid who fought against extremely heavy odds to force a superpower to withdraw its soldiers from his country. But inspite of their acknowledged success the war continued. What did the military balance sheet look like at the end of the struggle against the Soviet/Kabul forces: (1) the Soviets were forced to withdraw their 'limited contingent'; (2) eighty to ninety percent of the countryside remained under the control of the *Mujahideen*; (3) several provincial capitals fell into the hands of the freedom fighters; (4) a large number of Afghan soldiers defected or were killed reducing the fighting strength of the Afghan army from 100,000 to about 30,000; (5) changes also occured on the socio-political plane due to

the *Mujahideen* 'victory';(6) the Najibullah government was willing now to share power with the opposition; (7) the military pressure applied by the Muslim revolutionaries on the communist government in Kabul made them rescind many of the steps taken to convert Afghanistan into a communist state; (8) the name of the country which had been earlier changed to Democratic Republic of Afghanistan was changed back to the Republic of Afghanistan; (9) the original, black, red and green tricolour was brought back; (10) greater emphasis was again given to religious rituals; (11) atleast on the face of it Afghanistan got back some of its Islamic character. The credit of all this must go to the military pressure applied on the DRA by the *Mujahideen* forces; (12) the success of the Afghan *Mujahideen* against the Soviets in Afghanistan encouraged several other countries to throw off the yoke of communism; (13) the traditional role of the Maliks, Khans and religious leaders diminished as the young freedom fighters gained importance in their respective areas and (14) the ethnic division did get diluted somewhat when fighting against a common enemy but persisted after the main cause of the struggle had been removed.

Pakistan's Role in The Military Dimension of The Conflict

Pakistan's role in the Afghan conflict was embodied in the person of General Zia-ul-Haq. He was the architect of his country's Afghan policy and the strongest adherent to the *Mujahideen* cause. He firmly believed that the *Jehad* in Afghanistan was a *Jehad* for Pakistan. He knew all the Afghan leaders personally and spent long hours cajoling, encouraging and prodding them to continue the struggle. He assured them of Pakistan's full support in obtaining outside assistance for them. He advocated their cause at every platform and every forum both in the country and abroad. He spoke boldly in their favour and condemned the Soviet Union in the strongest terms for their occupation of Afghanistan. He solicited every world leader to give military aid to the freedom fighters.

His passion for the Afghan cause was so great that he accepted the bomb blasts, the rocket attacks, the Ojhri Camp disaster, the air raids, the artillery bombardment and finally death without moving away from his perceived principled stand on the Afghanistan issue. His declared wish, which Victor P. Yakunin,

the Soviet Ambassador in Islamabad, did not appreciate very much, was to offer his prayers at the central mosque in Kabul. A Soviet minister had warned the Pakistani Ambassador in Moscow that the Soviets were going to teach General Zia a lesson if he did not cease his support for the *Mujahideen*. "We wont bomb him but we will teach him a lesson" said Yuli Voronstov[95]. Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister and later his country's envoy in Kabul. Ten days later General Zia died in an aircrash.

There is no doubt that President Zia's presence was crucial to the situation in Afghanistan. The *Mujahideen* depended on his support and the Kabul regime feared it. Gulbadin Hikmatyar felt that if he was alive the momentum of support would have been maintained. "It was reduced, not because of a change of the Afghan policy by the new regime in Pakistan but because of the normal disruption that occurs whenever a government changes", said Hikmatyar diplomatically at a press conference in Islamabad in answer to a direct question by a foreign correspondent[96].

To the *Mujahideen* Zia was a strong, true, faithful and capable friend since he stood like a 'stone wall' against all pressures by the Soviet Union. The presence of the Soviet air force on Afghan airfields only a few hundred kilometres away and the stationing of the Red army along the Pak-Afghan border threatened the security of Pakistan but President Zia was not unduly perturbed. He was fully convinced that if Afghanistan fell to the Soviets Pakistan would be the next target. He was also certain that that would not be possible unless they could consolidate their position in Afghanistan which they should not be allowed to do. Total and unrestricted support to the *Mujahideen* was, according to the late President, necessary.

It has been widely reported and generally believed by the foreign media that Pakistan was directly and intimately involved in the military dimension of the Afghan conflict. At one end of the spectrum were the statements of the Kabul regime, the Soviet Union, India and other allies of Karmal and Najib. According to them Pakistan not only provided bases and training camps but they planned the military operations in which Pakistan army personnel also took part. At the other end of the spectrum were the repeated statements of the government of Pakistan which continued to deny all such allegations. The public posture of the

national authorities in Pakistan being that only humanitarian assistance was being provided to the Afghan refugees.

The truth appears to lie in between these two extreme views. There is no doubt that Pakistan did become a conduit for weapons supplied by the United States and other friendly countries opposed to Soviet policies in Southwest Asia. It was pointless refuting this allegation because there was no other way for the weapons to reach *Mujahideen* hands. It was also a fact that the weapons so received were stocked on Pakistani soil. The Ojhri camp in Rawalpindi was a store house for weapons meant for the *Mujahideen*. A respected senior citizen from the area of Parachinar told the author of underground ammunition and weapon dumps close to the Pak-Afghan border. A large stock of arms meant for the *Mujahideen* fighting in the northern provinces blew up in the Pakistani city of Chitral in March, 1990.

Since there was no clear cut division between those Afghans who had sought refuge and those who were carrying out an insurgency inside Afghanistan the refugee tented villages lying close to the border did alternate as sanctuaries when the *Mujahideen* used them as bases for operation inside Afghanistan. Reliable sources have confirmed that training camps for the *Mujahideen* did exist, some of them even on Pakistani territory. It is but natural to expect the supporters of the *Mujahideen* cause to train the fighters on the new and sophisticated weapons they supplied.

Planning of major operations could have been discussed at the frequent meetings between the Afghan leaders and officials of the ISI, but there is no evidence to prove that Pakistani military personnel actually participated in the fighting inside Afghanistan.

Pakistan certainly went beyond giving humanitarian assistance to the Afghan *Mujahideen* in support of its national interest. Every nation finding itself in similar situations does so. Mukti Bahini was equipped, trained and launched by the Indians in East Pakistan. The Tamil Tigers had sanctuaries in southern India. The United States openly supported the Contras against the Sandinista government in Nicaragua. The Soviet Union sent their troops into Afghanistan and China makes no secret of its all out assistance to the Khmer Rouge. Pakistan's role in the Afghan conflict was in keeping with its objective of forcing the Russians to withdraw their troops from Afghanistan.

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6 War of Liberation (Political Dimension)

"Politics is not an exact science. It is the doctrine of the possible. The art of the next best".

Oto von Bismark (1815-1898)
Founder and first Chancellor of the German Empire and political genius of the highest rank.

A military solution to a problem, even if it be a total victory for one of the adversaries, gives, at best, only a temporary advantage. It does not, necessarily, solve the basic issues. Neither does it provide stability nor does it bring durable peace and harmony between the parties concerned. Unequal treaties, which have been signed by the vanquished under pressure, result in an unenduring armistice which is broken as soon as the weaker party to the conflict sees itself strong enough to repudiate them.

Germany's response to the Treaty of Versailles, wherein it was forced to give up the Danzig corridor to Poland, after its defeat in World War I, was one of the factors which made Germany start another world war. The forcible partition of Palestine under the Balfour Declaration of 1919 and the creation of the state of Israel led to the continuing struggle by the Palestinians for the right to have a homeland of their own. Iraq used its military superiority in 1979 to enforce the Thelweg principle[1] in the Shatt-el-Arab waterway which had been violated by the Shahinshah of Iran in the Algiers Treaty between the two nations. The integration of Kashmir into the Indian Union against the wishes of its people led to the uprising in the valley against Indian occupation.

Relations between nations or those between various groups within a country can only be enduring if a political solution is sought to their problems which takes into account the interest of all those involved and is acceptable to the majority of the people concerned. So in any conflict which leads to a military confrontation it is absolutely necessary to start a dialogue between adversaries as soon as possible. Negotiations do not have to wait for a cease-fire or an end to the hostilities. The military and political tracks can run side by side.

Talks between hostile nations can be direct or indirect, they may be under the auspices of the United Nations or through the effort of any other international organisation. Sometimes the good offices of a single country acceptable to both the aggressor and the aggrieved may be able to bring them to the negotiation table. The initial positions taken in such talks are always the extreme view of each which appear unbridgeable. But if there is no break-down and if the talks are allowed to continue a certain amount of flexibility, in most cases, starts creeping in. This give and take leads to a compromise solution which may not be the most desirable but perhaps best in the circumstances for all concerned.

Although all those involved in a conflict very soon agree that a comprehensive political solution must be achieved, negotiations are prolonged because each party gives its own interpretation to that settlement. Each tries to protect its objectives and wants to ensure that the adversary does not get all the advantage. For abiding peace each side must feel that it has achieved its minimum aim.

This chapter deals with the political dimensions of the Afghan crisis covering mainly the external factors. Who initiated a negotiated settlement? When did the dialogue between the two main actors begin? What were the initial issues involved and to what extent were they altered as the situation on the ground changed? What were the national interests which each party wanted to protect? The parleys at Geneva have been critically analysed to see if anything better could have been achieved if a different course of action was adopted. While doing so the environment and pressures prevailing at that time have been kept in mind.

The internal aspect of the Afghan problem which deals with the interaction between the *Mujahideen* and the PDPA and

amongst the *Mujahideen* themselves has been covered in a later chapter.

The Political Process

While the *Mujahideen* were seeking a decision on the battlefield, Pakistan, the country most directly affected by the Afghan conflict, acting through Bangladesh and other Muslim countries took the Afghan issue to the United Nations immediately after the massive induction of Soviet forces into Afghanistan. Eight long years elapsed before an agreement could be reached, between the national authorities concerned. Unfortunately only the external dimensions of the conflict was solved and that too partially. The reason for the slow progress in finding a comprehensive political solution to the Afghan conflict was that each of the parties affected wanted, quite naturally, to protect and preserve its national interest.

The Soviets were not willing to go back till they could ensure that the regime they had placed in Kabul had a fair chance of survival. The United States on the other hand not only wanted to ensure that the Russians withdrew in the shortest possible time but that they did not leave behind a client state. They did, however, concede that USSR had legitimate interests in Afghanistan. Islamabad's objectives were similar to that of Washington with the exception that General Zia wanted to see a conservative Islamic government in Kabul which was a matter of concern to the US. The Kabul regime was agreeable to a sharing of power with the opposition but was not prepared to liquidate itself. The *Mujahideen* were a house divided amongst realists, moderates and the so-called fundamentalists; between Pushtuns and non-Pushtuns; between pro-Saudis and pro-Iranians. Those in Iran were a category by themselves. In addition there were a host of independent freedom fighters. Then there were other neighbouring countries who were supporting the anti-Soviet elements and rightfully expected their interests to be safeguarded at the negotiating table. This made the process of finding a political solution, which would satisfy all, extremely time consuming.

On an urgent request of more than 50 nations a meeting of the Security Council was held on 5 January, 1980[2] and a resolution calling for an emergency special session of the General Assembly to examine the question of the situation in Afghanistan and its

implication for international peace and security was sponsored by Bangladesh. As expected the Soviet Union, exercising its 113th veto[3], killed the resolution on the excuse that the events in Afghanistan did not endanger peace and stability in the region. The Kabul regime had opposed the convening of the meeting of the Security Council as they claimed that it would amount to interference in the internal matters of a member of the United Nations.

In order to pacify the world community which was shortly to hold a special session of the UN General Assembly in New York to discuss the Afghan situation arising out of the entry of Soviet troops into Afghanistan, Babrak Karmal, took the initiative by giving a call for peace talks on 11 January, 1980[4]. He said he wanted to solve the problem with Pakistan through negotiations. He also announced that the Russian forces would be withdrawn as soon as 'foreign aggression' and 'intervention' had ended. On 14 January, Karmal again came up with a suggestion to solve the issue peacefully. He proposed trilateral talks between Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran[5]. Neither of the two proposals were given any heed as neither Pakistan nor Iran was willing to enter into any direct talks with the Kabul regime which they did not recognise.

The special session of the General Assembly met on 14 January, 1990 and passed a resolution by which the members strongly deplored the recent armed intervention in Afghanistan; appealed to all states to respect the sovereignty, territorial integrity, political independence and non-aligned character of Afghanistan and to refrain from any interference in the internal affairs of that country; called for immediate, unconditional and total withdrawal of the foreign troops from Afghanistan and urged all parties concerned to assist in bringing about a return of the Afghan refugees in peace and honour[6]. 104 countries voted in favour of the resolution, 18 voted against it and 18 nations abstained.

All subsequent UN resolutions on Afghanistan had the same substance with minor changes in the wordings. The words 'unconditional and total' were dropped with regards to the withdrawal of foreign forces and para 1, in which the members deplored the armed intervention, did not appear again. On 14 May, 1980 Babrak Karmal proposed bi-lateral talks between Afghanistan and its neighbours, with USA and USSR providing

guarantees against external interference but this too was neither acceptable to Pakistan nor to Iran[7].

The next initiative was taken by the European Economic Community (EEC). The proposals made on 30 June, 1980 for a peaceful settlement of the Afghan problem were put forward by Lord Carrington, the British Foreign Secretary and the then Chairman of the EEC. The proposal envisaged a two stage conference on the future of Afghanistan. The first stage was to work out arrangements for cessation of external intervention and establishing of safeguards to prevent such intervention in the future. The conference was to comprise of all the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, Pakistan, India, Secretary General of the United Nations and the Secretary General of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC). (India's inclusion reflects the significance that EEC members gave to it in regional problems). Strangely enough Iran, which was very much affected by the Afghan conflict, was not included because of its strained relations with the United States and with members of the EEC.

In the second stage of the EEC proposal the representatives of the Afghan people were also expected to join the conference. No distinction was made between the PDPA and the *Mujahideen*. It is presumed that the EEC would have been agreeable to both participating in the meeting. This large group would then try to reach on agreement on all matters to ensure Afghanistan's future as an independent state[8].

Andrei Gromyko, the Soviet Foreign Minister, termed the EEC proposal, as a 'British initiative'. He called it "unrealistic and unacceptable"[9]. According to Gromyko, the conference should have included the government of Afghanistan in the negotiations as an equal partner. The Kabul New Times echoed the view of the Soviet leader by calling the European proposals "unacceptable, brazen and provocative"[10]. It reiterated the Afghan government's suggestion of holding tri-lateral talks between Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran. This proposal was formally made again by Kabul on 24 August, 1981[11] but it was neither accepted by Iran nor by Pakistan.

The EEC continued to maintain that their proposals were 'logical' 'realistic' and 'constructive'. However, no further progress was made as none of the actors directly concerned, nor the two superpowers responded to the European suggestion. Nothing

more, therefore, was heard of the efforts by the EEC, to find a just and honourable solution to the Afghan problem. The European Parliament later called on the member states to recognise the *Mujahideen* as a legitimate national liberation movement and to give them all support.

The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in its 35th Session passed a resolution on Afghanistan on 20 November, 1980 in which the three points mentioned in the special UNGA session on Afghanistan held on 14 January, 1980 were reiterated[12]. The Secretary General was also asked to appoint a representative to lend his good offices to the parties for promoting a political settlement to the Afghan issue. 111 nations voted in favour of the resolution, 22 were against it and 12 countries absented themselves. As the years rolled by the number of states in favour of the resolution on Afghanistan increased till it reached the figure of 123 nations out of 159, who supported the demand for the immediate withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan (For year wise voting pattern at the UNGA see table 6.

The Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC)

Since the international borders of a Muslim country had been violated the Organisation of Islamic Conference held an extraordinary session of its Foreign Ministers at Islamabad within a month of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The OIC meeting condemned the Soviet military aggression against the Afghan people and "demanded immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all Soviet troops stationed on Afghan territories". The resolution also suspended membership of Afghanistan in the OIC[13].

The Foreign Ministers of the OIC held their regular session at Islamabad on 22 May, 1980 in which they re-affirmed the resolution passed in January. In addition a three-member standing committee comprising of the Foreign Ministers of Pakistan (Agha Shahi), Iran (Sadegh Qutubzadeh) and the Secretary General of the OIC (Habib Chatti) was appointed. It was given the task of seeking ways and means, including appropriate consultations as well as the convening of an international conference under the auspices of the United Nations, or otherwise, for a comprehensive solution of the grave crisis with respect to Afghanistan[14]. The committee was authorised to enter into negotiations with the representatives of the Kabul regime without recognising it[15].

Table - 6

UNGA VOTING PATTERN

ON THE RESOLUTION OF AFGHANISTAN

	For	Against	Abstained
14 January, 1980	104	18	18
20 November, 1980	111	22	12
19 November, 1981	116	23	12
29 November, 1982	114	21	13
23 November, 1983	116	20	17
15 November, 1984	119	20	14
13 November, 1985	122	19	12
5 November, 1986	122	19	11
9 November, 1987	123	20	11
4 November, 1988	Consensus on a joint resolution put up by Pakistan and the USSR.		
1 November, 1989	Consensus on a joint resolution put up by Pakistan and USSR.		
7 November, 1990	Consensus on a joint resolution put up by Pakistan and USSR.		

Source: *Keesings Contemporary Archives.*

The standing committee of the OIC invited the Kabul regime and the *Mujahideen* to attend a meeting in accordance with the OIC resolution passed in-Islamabad. The committee had its first session at Mount Pelerin in Switzerland where they were to discuss the possibility of finding a political solution to the Afghan problem. Professor Abdur Rab Rasul Sayyaf, Engineer Gulbadin Hikmatyar and Professor Burhanuddin Rabbani representing the freedom fighters, attended whereas Babrak Karmal rejected the invitation[16]. Since the OIC had suspended the membership of Afghanistan it was naive to expect Babrak Karmal to accept an invitation from an organisaton which had shown him the exit door. Pakistan and Iran at that stage, and in keeping with the mandate given to the three-member OIC peace committee on Afghanistan, were willing to talk directly to the representative of the Kabul regime without having to recognise it.

It is also interesting to note that in 1980 the *Mujahideen* did not consider it improper to participate in negotiations to which the Kabul regime had also been invited but in 1990 they insisted on not engaging in any talks whatsoever with any representative of the Najibullah government. Kabul also made a U turn. Ten years earlier they were opposed to talking to 'bandits and criminals'. A decade later they were willing to share power with them. So there is nothing permanent in political dealings. All that matters is the protection of one's interests in a changing political scene.

OIC Summit

The heads of states of 44 Islamic countries met at Taif, Saudi Arabia, on 21-22 January, 1981 for their regular OIC summit meeting. The 14 page Mecca Declaration, among other things, demanded an immediate and unconditional withdrawal of foreign forces from Afghanistan and supported the right of the Afghan people to chose their own form of government[17]. USSR was not condemned in the declaration on Afghanistan because of the sensitivities of the pro-Soviet member states. Mr. Agha Shahi, when asked as to why that was so merely replied "It is not appropriate to condemn a person with whom you are going to talk"[18]. Iran did not attend the OIC summit at Taif because of the Iran-Iraq War but it was willing to give deep consideration to the political dialogue on promoting a solution to the Afghan crisis[19].

No progress could be made by the OIC committee as the Karmal regime continued to reject the invitation to enter into a dialogue with 'miscreants'.

In late January the French President Francois Mitterand proposed an international conference on Afghanistan in which the five permanent members of the Security Council, alongwith Iran and Pakistan were to participate[20]. Pakistan was surprised at the French suggestion to which they did not agree. The proposal was therefore given no attention by Islamabad and Tehran.

USSR

In a statement signed by President Brezhnev and Babrak Karmal on 16 October, 1981 both sides declared themselves in favour of a political settlement of the Afghanistan issue which would contribute in improving the international political climate[21]. As regards the withdrawal of the Red army from Afghanistan that, according to Moscow, would only be considered in the light of a political settlement and not until guarantees of non resumption of subversive activities from abroad were given[22]. Brezhnev also suggested normalisation of relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan implying tacit recognition of the Karmal regime by Pakistan and a stoppage of what he perceived to be an interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan by Pakistan. He also hinted at an acceptance of an internationally recognised frontier between the two countries if Pakistan does not encourage the destablisation of the pro-Soviet regime in Kabul.

The Soviet Union continued to insist that talks should be held between Afghanistan and its neighbours - Pakistan and Iran, with USA and USSR providing guarantees against external interference[23]. This was the position taken by them in 1980 and this was the final shape of the talks held later at Geneva. The fact that they were held indirectly was only a cosmetic variation to the Soviet/Afghan proposals.

Iran

Iran had always been insisting that the Afghan *Mujahideen* should be included in any talks on Afghanistan. During the visit of the Soviet Foreign Minister to Tehran, he was presented a set of proposals which could help in solving the Afghan crisis. These were: immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan; Soviet forces to be replaced by a joint peace keeping force comprising of troops from Iran, Pakistan and an unspecified country and the present Afghan government to give way to a 30 member Council of Clergy taken from the Muslim Ummah[24].

Pakistan gave tacit support to these proposals as they came from a friendly neighbouring country saying that the Iranian proposals merited attention[25]. Both the Afghan government and the *Mujahideen* rejected the Iranian proposals. Babrak Karmal called it a vain attempt by the fundamentalist, fanatical and reactionary element in Iran who had completely lost touch with the realities of the Afghan society[26]. Iran's cooperation with the Soviet Union was also linked to the stoppage of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union's (CPSU) support to the Iranian Tudeh Party, cessation of abnormal activities by the USSR's Embassy in Tehran and permission to open an Iranian mission in Tajikistan[27]. The Soviets rejected the proposals. With no takers the Iranian proposals were not heard of again.

Non Aligned Movement (NAM)

The Non Aligned Movement's meeting in New Delhi on 9-13 February, 1981 reiterated the points included in the UN resolution. The Indians and some pro-Soviet countries tried to play down the Afghan crisis during this meeting while Pakistan and its friends succeeded in making the NAM express grave concern for the continuing foreign armed intervention in Afghanistan. Agha Shahi insisted on the insertion of a call for the withdrawl of the Soviet forces, in the text of this final declaration of the conference. Fifty five countries out of the ninety six present supported Pakistan[28]. At the behest of some pro-Soviet countries, however, the clause of 'non intervention and non interference' was added to the UN resolution so as to cover both the military intervention by the Soviet Union and the interference from neighbouring countries.

Bilateral Talks Between USA and USSR

The two superpowers held the key to the situation in Afghanistan. The Soviets created the problem by sending its troops into Afghanistan in December, 1979 which increased the momentum of the resistance as a fratricidal war was converted into a struggle for the liberation of their country from foreign occupation. The United States intensified the conflict by supplying modern weapons to the *Mujahideen*. Both were fighting their 'hot war' by proxy.

In July, 1982, the United States and the Soviet Union held their first discussion on Afghanistan in Moscow. It was, however,

too early to except any positive results. The impact of the war in Afghanistan had still not been felt by the Russian leaders. Brezhnev was still in command. Glasnost had not yet been accepted. Perestroika had not entered the Russian lexicon. The Soviet citizens only knew that their men in uniform were performing an international duty in a socialist country. TV coverage in Moscow showed Soviet soldiers distributing fertiliser and constructing bridges in Afghanistan[29]. They did not know about the casualties returning home in coffins. Four to five billion dollars a year[30] to maintain Soviet presence in Afghanistan was not considered by the Kremlin leadership to be too high a price to pay to keep a pro-Soviet government in power in a neighbouring country.

The US administration could easily afford 500 to 600 million dollars a year for the CIA to mount covert operations in Afghanistan[31] if it kept the Soviets embroiled in a no-win situation. The bilateral talks between the two superpowers, which could have produced some positive results, therefore remained fruitless.

Pakistan's Compulsions

It was no easy task to accommodate the interests of all those who had a stake in the eventual results. The interest of those who were giving military assistance and those giving massive financial support had to be taken into account. The threat from the Soviet forces in Afghanistan had to be kept in mind. The presence of millions of armed *Mujahideen* on Pakistani soil was a factor which could not be ignored.

Pakistan had to find a political settlement while working under several constraints: The Soviet Union had sent their troops to prevent a pro-Soviet regime from falling and were determined to see that they (PDPA) are not left out altogether from the future shape in Afghanistan; USA wanted to raise the cost of the Soviet military intervention and an end to the pro-communist regime; the Kabul 'government' was trying to ensure that the rebels were deprived of their sanctuaries in neighbouring countries and that they were not provided any military assistance from foreign powers; Saudi Arabia was providing the funds to keep the resistance movement going, their suggestions therefore had to be given due considerations; Iran was also wanting the foreign military contingent to withdraw from Afghanistan but was not

happy with the predominant role being played by Washington and Ryadh; China, Pakistan's closest ally, had to be accommodated and finally the objectives of the hydra-headed Islamic Unity of the Afghan *Mujahideen* (IUAM) had to be kept in view. The requirements of all of these had to be met while safeguarding Pakistan's own interest. It was a herculean task indeed. The fact that the nations concerned finally succeeded in hammering out an agreement after six years of negotiations goes to the credit of all those who were represented at Geneva.

The Geneva Negotiations

Pakistan, took another initiative to find a political solution by asking the United Nations Secretary General to appoint his representative to arrange for talks between the regime in Kabul, Iran and Pakistan. A letter to the United Nations Secretary General requesting him to nominate a special representative to handle the Afghanistan issue was sent by Mr. Agha Shahi, on 2 January, 1981[32]. The Kabul regime also expressed its willingness for talks with Iran and Pakistan under UN auspices[33] which President Zia-ul-Haq thought was a good augury for finding a political settlement of the Afghan crisis. However Iran rejected a dialogue with the authorities in Kabul[34].

The United Nations Secretary General nominated Mr. Javier Parez de Cueller (61), a Peruvian diplomat, as his special representative on Afghanistan on 11 February, 1981[35], at the conference of NAM foreign ministers in New Delhi, for facilitating negotiations among the parties concerned. He began his long and arduous task of bringing the parties to the conflict to the negotiating table. Parez first visited Islamabad and Kabul in April, 1981 which was followed by another visit in July. In his two shuttle visits he succeeded in making them agree to the agenda of the talks which was generally the same as mentioned in the UN resolution with some modifications.

The agenda having been worked out the next issue, on which a major difference arose, was the mode of the talks. Kabul and their supporters, the Soviets, wanted Pakistan to hold direct negotiations with the Afghan government as they were desperately wanting to get the Karmal regime recognised by Islamabad hoping that other countries would follow soon. Pakistan, however, was only prepared for indirect talks as they did not want to give the impression that Babrak Karmal's

Administration was a legitimate one. It maintained this position throughout. The OIC had also asked its members not to recognise the new Kabul regime. When Nikolai Firyubin, Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister, came to Islamabad and suggested that direct talks between Kabul and Islamabad, should be held Pakistan rejected the proposal.

In February, 1982 Parez de Cueller became the new United Nations Secretary General. He appointed the Ecuadorean diplomat, Mr. Diego Cordovez, who was his Under-Secretary general for political affairs, as his personal representative for handling the Afghan problems[36]. Mr. Cordovez visited Islamabad, Kabul and Tehran and as a result he was able to hammer out the substantive content and scope of the issues, These were: (1) withdrawal of foreign troops; (2) non-intervention and non-interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan; (3) return of the Afghan refugees and (4) international guarantees of non-interference. It is significant to note that the second demand given in the United Nations resolutions year after year viz the right of the Afghan people to form their own government and the right to chose their economic, political and social system free of outside intervention, coercion or constraint, was not included as one of the issues. This was probably considered to be an internal matter for the Afghans to decide themselves.

Discussions on an arrangement which could ensure the peaceful transfer of power to a provisional administration in Afghanistan may have delayed the start of the negotiations but its inclusion, even at a later stage, may have resulted in a more substantial Geneva Accord.

Progress of Geneva Talks

Geneva 1

The first round of talks took place between 16 to 25 June, 1982 at Geneva. The Kabul regime was representated by Shah Mohammad Dost and Pakistan by its Foreign Minister, Sahabzada Yaqub Khan. The Indirect talks were held under the auspices of the United Nations (the UN Secretary General's special representative meeting the two delegations separately). Diego Cordovez described the talks as 'constructive' but felt that too much importance was being given to formalities[37]. At this meeting the agenda and the format were agreed upon. The interlocutors

also succeeded in discussing the specifics of each of the four items on the agenda and it was felt that they would form integral components of a comprehensive settlement of the Afghan problem[38]. The UN Secretary General in his report to the Security Council specified the purpose of the Geneva round of discussions. He believed that these discussions would lay the foundation for the promotion of good neighbourly relations and cooperation among the states in the area and for strengthening international peace and security in the region[39].

Geneva 2

After a series of visits to Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan, Cordovez was able to get the two diplomats from Islamabad and Kabul together again at the Swiss resort for a second round in April, 1983. The details of the talks were not made public but again they were supposed to have been held in 'a very constructive atmosphere'. The protagonists agreed that the four issues were interlinked and should be considered as a package and not to be implemented separately at different timings. The meeting continued after a break of two months and some progress was made but according to Cordovez certain things had still to happen before an agreement could be reached. The Soviet leaders were also 'profoundly satisfied with the talks'[40]. The Pakistani Foreign Minister, on returning to Islamabad, said that the talks at Geneva had taken the matter a stage further and that they were now discussing the 'structure of a peaceful settlement'. When asked by a correspondent about the participation of the Afghan refugees, his comments were "consultation with the refugees is and should be an indispensable part of the comprehensive settlement"[41].

Here-in lay a dichotomy and an unrealistic situation. Pakistan was working towards a withdrawal of Soviet troops and was willing to accept the clause of non-intervention and non-interference in order to achieve this objective. The *Mujahideen*, who were to be consulted, on the other hand, were determined to overthrow the communist regime by force, operating from Pakistani soil. The Kabul regime was trying to tie Pakistan down to a commitment which could not be implemented even if it wanted to do so.

An agreement was reportedly reached on replacing Karmal as at that time the anti-communist elements wanted to deal with anybody but Karmal[42].

Geneva 3

This took place between 24-31 August, 1984. The procedure of holding the talks also changed from indirect to 'proximity' talks. Which meant that both parties would be present at the same time in the same building but in two adjacent rooms. This would facilitate the work of the United Nations mediator and also expedite the proceedings. The four elements previously agreed upon came under discussion and it was accepted that they should be treated as four separate instruments, each to be signed by the concerned parties. Though the second clause dealing with non-intervention and non-interference was a bilateral matter between Pakistan and Afghanistan, the question of international guarantees for ensuring non-interference and non-intervention in the internal affairs of Afghanistan figured in the talks.

Geneva 4

This was held between 20-25 June, 1985. Agreement was reached on the draft of two of the four instruments under discussion as both governments agreed to the formulation of Instrument 2 and 3 viz non-intervention and non-interference and the return of the Afghan refugees respectively. Agreement on this issue was reached knowing fully well that the *Mujahideen* would continue to wage their struggle from Pakistan's soil. Kabul regime brought up the issue of holding direct talks during further negotiations. Pakistan rejected the proposal.

Geneva 5

Two months later the two Foreign Ministers met again at Geneva and gave final touches to Instrument 4 viz international guarantees for non-interference and non-intervention. Kabul reiterated its proposal for direct talks to discuss the withdrawal time table. Pakistan did not agree to any further change in the format of the talks.

Geneva 6

(16-19 December, 1985). With sufficient progress made in the political negotiations and with now only the question of an acceptable time frame for the withdrawal of Soviet troops remaining, Kabul again insisted on holding direct talks from now on. This was in the hope that tacit approval to their legality would be forthcoming when the withdrawal of Soviet forces was in sight.

The earlier agreements appeared to be a sop for the real objective ie: recognition of the Kabul regime by Pakistan. Pakistan refused to accept the proposal of direct talks as nothing had changed since the negotiations had begun and there was no justification for changing the format of the meetings. There was a deadlock again. This continued till the Soviets replaced Karmal by Dr. Mohammad Najibullah, the former Chief of the Afghan Secret Service (KHAD) on 4 May, 1986. He was expected to bring about national reconciliation, among the various segments in Afghanistan, unite the two factions of the PDPA and enlarge his base of support. That done he could ask for legitimacy from his neighbours.

But that was not to be, Gorbachev, who had by then made up his mind to withdraw his troops from Afghanistan, directed Najibullah to remove the deadlock and not to insist on holding direct talks. To give further impetus to the talks he announced at Vladivostock that the Soviet Union would be withdrawing six regiments from Afghanistan[43].

Geneva 7

It consisted of a series of four negotiations held between May 1986 to September, 1987, all devoted to the fourth instrument viz the time frame for the withdrawal of Soviet troops. Kabul had initially proposed a time schedule of four years. Pakistan replied by insisting that it should be in months not years - and suggested four months. They nearly got what they wanted but it took two years to do so. Acceptance on four years time frame would have given considerable time for the pro-Marxist regime to consolidate their position in Afghanistan. It was not expected then that the negotiations would drag on for another two years and it was hoped that an agreement would be reached in a much shorter period of time.

The reasons for this wide gap was an effort by the Kabul regime to strengthen its armed forces, to suppress the 'rebellion' using Soviet troops and to try and implement its national reconciliation programme under the cover of Soviet bayonets. Pakistan and the *Mujahideen* did not want to give time to the Soviets to leave behind a strong government which would become difficult to remove after they left. So they insisted on a time frame based only on logistical requirements. Some Americans wanted to impose the same humiliation on the Russians as they themselves

suffered in Vietnam. One way of doing it was to force them to leave in a hurry. Geneva 7 reduced the gap between the two proposals to 8 months - Kabul offering 16 months and Pakistan 8 months. Cordovez visited Tehran on 19 November, 1986 and came back with the opinion that the overriding concern of the Iranian government was the withdrawal of troops and they too wanted the Russians to de-induct their troops within the shortest possible time.

Geneva 8

These talks were held in two phases - The first from 25 February to 9 March, 1987 and the second phase from 7 to 10 September, 1987. The main item for discussion was the time - frame for withdrawal. Perez de Cuellar met with Gorbachev in Moscow on 29 June, 1987 who told him that 'the main concern of the USSR was that Afghanistan should have a neutral and independent regime which would not be hostile to the Soviet Union nor indeed to any of its neighbours'[44]. The UN Secretary General was concerned that the Afghans had not so far got in motion, a widely acceptable mechanism for dialogue to ensure continued peaceful conditions in Afghanistan and in the region[45]. It was in March, 1987 that the Soviets mentioned the need for a government of national reconciliation as a pre-condition for withdrawal.

It took another year with several more behind the scene discussions before the final round could take place at Geneva. The issues now raised appeared to be after thoughts by both sides as these were not included in the four point agenda of the Geneva meeting. All the leaders involved were trying to extract as much as they could in the final phase of negotiations.

Gennadi Gerasimov, the Soviet foreign ministry spokesman, stated, in November, 1987, that the Soviet pull out could take place in 7 to 12 months if a formula for the composition of an interim government could be agreed upon. This condition was however, rejected by Pakistan which wanted the withdrawal as early as possible. The rejection was perhaps based on the assumption that the pro-Soviet Kabul regime would fall soon after the withdrawal and the *Mujahideen* would assume power. Hence the formation of a provisional administration in the interim period would not be necessary. Talks on this issue, according to their thinking, would only delay the withdrawal. Even the Americans

were against the formation of an interim government before the withdrawal. George Shultz, the US Secretary of State, told Edward Shevardnadze, the Soviet Foreign Minister, in Washington, that the United States did not agree to this Soviet proposal and that they should leave Afghanistan without any precondition[46].

It appears that the Soviets were still not confident that Najib would be able to stay in power after the Soviet troops had left. Their insistence on an interim government also indicated a flexibility in their approach by showing a willingness to let the *Mujahideen* share power with the PDPA. Moscow had so far been calling them '*dushman*' - now they were respectable enough to be given ministries.

The idea of a broad based government in Kabul before the withdrawal was lurking in the minds of Diego Cordevez as well. He met ex-King Zahir Shah in Rome in December, 1987 to explore the possibility of him playing a role in the future of Afghanistan. General Zia-ul-Haq also had been insisting on a provisional government in Kabul but had not made it a pre-condition for the withdrawal of Soviet forces. He had even suggested that all factions to the Afghan conflict should be represented in the interim administration - even the much hated PDPA. The formula he proposed to two different foreign journalists in December, 1987 was equal representation of the three components involved viz *Mujahideen*, the refugees and the PDPA.

The Soviets gradually withdrew their pre-condition of an interim government before pull out. Gorbachev in a press statement in Washington on 10 December, 1987 stated inter alia "After hostilities cease a process of political settlement begins. We shall assist it in the measure of our influence. But the main effort should be by the real forces within Afghanistan[47]. This was contrary to what the Soviet spokesmen had said in November. Apparently Gorbachev had made up his mind to get out of Afghanistan as soon as possible and did not want to get entangled in the formation of a provisional government which would delay the withdrawal considerably. He did not want to link the withdrawal with arrangements for an interim government any longer. This now became the new Soviet theme which was confirmed by Diego Cordovez in an interview with the daily newspaper Muslim of Islamabad in January, 1988.

It was Pakistan now that continued to talk about the need of an interim government before withdrawal[48] because they had belatedly realised that the *Mujahideen* were not strong enough to inflict a military defeat on the Kabul forces. They now felt that even after the Soviet withdrawal Najibullah could continue remaining in power as he controlled the major cities where most of the population inside Afghanistan was residing. The United States differed with Pakistan in this approach and showed no interest in trying to promote an interim government in Kabul. Mr. Zain Noorani, Pakistan's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, during his visit to Washington, is reported to have asked George Shultz to put pressure on Shevardnadze on the question of having an interim administration in Afghanistan before the Soviet withdrawal. Shultz is said to have replied "Only a few months ago, at this very place, I told Shevardnadze not to link the withdrawal with the formation of an interim government. How can I now say the opposite ..... Any way since Pakistan now feels that this step is necessary we shall do so"[49].

Najibullah, while calling attempts to introduce new conditions as unrelated, illegal and unjustifiable, emphasised that the military way of solving things is futile[50]. When Najib's attention was drawn to the fact that by signing the para on non-intervention and non-interference he would be accepting a recognised border between Pakistan and Afghanistan. His reply was Pakistanis are going to change the para. Abdul Wakil, Afghanistan's Foreign Minister, handed over a note to Mr. Cordovez about the formulation of Instrument 1 which included the words 'international borders'[51]. Shevardnadze also considered this formulation a 'stumbling block' but the wordings were finally accepted without any change. Robert Peck, US Assistant Secretary of State, stated, that USA like a vast majority of states had long accepted the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan as a recognised international border[52].

To complicate matters further a red herring was raised by Pakistan when President Zia told a Washington Post correspondent "we cannot sign an agreement with Najibullah or a new government dominated by the PDPA"[53]. It must have shocked Cordovez as he had been working all along on the assumption that the two interlocutors would eventually sign the relevant documents when an agreement on all four instruments had been reached.

These new hitches did upset Diego Cordovez who till now was talking in very optimistic tones. On his return from Kabul he is reported to have said: "We are no closer to a solution to the Afghan problem" and "a lot of difficulties have yet to be overcome"[54].

Then came the announcement the world was waiting for. Michail Gorbachev, whose dynamism and a zest for taking initiatives had become well known, stated on 8 February, 1988 that Soviet troops will commence the withdrawal from 15 May, 1988 if an agreement was reached at Geneva peace talks by 15 March. The withdrawal he said would be completed in 10 months and that the pull out would not be linked to the formation of a new coalition government"[55].

Geneva 9

The announcement of specific dates put the ball in Pakistan's court. Should they go ahead and sign the agreement as all the four instruments were now acceptable? With time running out differences arose between the various centres of power in Pakistan. The civil government of Mr. Mohammad Khan Junejo was prepared to sign the Accord. he was against introducing any new element at this last moment. The President, who was also the Chief of Army Staff, wanted to put in the clause of an interim government before withdrawal, because that was the only way to prevent continued bloodshed inside Afghanistan and to ensure a smooth implementation of the Geneva Accord. This fact had dawned on General Zia when he came to the conclusion that a long drawn out civil war in Afghanistan after the return of Soviet forces was a clear possibility and that the *Mujahideen* did not have the ability to overthrow Najibullah's regime by force of arms contrary to what they were claiming before. General Zia was also given to believe, falsely, that the Peshawar - based *Mujahideen* would be 'persuaded' to agree on the composition of an interim government acceptable to the majority within a month or so. How is it that the ISI was not aware of the sharp differences that existed between the *Mujahideen* and the power struggle that would follow amongst them after the Russian troops had left Afghanistan?

Washington, however, was not in favour of putting this pre-condition as Reagan was keen to see the Soviets out of Afghanistan as soon as possible so as to add a feather in his cap.

Mr. Mohammad Khan Junejo takes the credit for insisting on both the superpowers to use their good offices to induct a government acceptable to all the Afghan people before the withdrawal. According to him he instructed Zain Noorani, not to sign the agreement just yet[56]. The Accord was consequently deferred for a month. The Prime Minister of Pakistan invited prominent leaders of the Opposition to come to Islamabad and discuss the Afghan situation prior to signing the Geneva Accord. Nineteen leaders from all major political parties attended the 3-day's (5-7 March, 1988) conference. The main issue was whether Pakistan should insist on the formation of an interim government before the withdrawal of the Soviet troops. There was a consensus of opinion on Pakistan signing the Accord and not insisting on an interim government before the withdrawal. The majority of the speakers thought that might delay the departure of the Russian forces[57]. In any case trying to obtain a consensus at this late stage was meaningless. Pakistan then accepted a formulation which would enjoin the UN representative to make efforts to form a broad based interim administration in Afghanistan but this was not to be linked with the signing of the Accord.

Zain Noorani, who appeared to be more in tune with President Zia than his Prime Minister repeated Pakistan's desire to see the modalities and process of formation of a transitional government to start before signing the instruments. However the Chief Executive felt that it was too late to induct new suggestions to the existing framework[58]. It is for this reason that differences arose between the President of Pakistan and his Prime Minister on the eve of the signing of the Geneva Agreement. Mohammad Khan Junejo was prepared to de-link the formation of an interim administration with the Russian withdrawal. General Zia was not very happy about dropping this condition.

In order to solicit the views of a cross section of people General Zia invited Mr. Ghulam Ishaq Khan, Chairman of the Senate; Mr. Agha Shahi the former Foreign Minister; Lieutenant General A.I. Akram, President of the Institute of Regional Studies; Air Chief Marshal Zulfiqar Ali Khan, later Pakistan's Ambassador to Washington and the author to discuss the question of signing the Geneva Accord in two seperate meetings. The choices according to him were: (1) should Pakistan refuse to sign the Geneva Accord till such time an interim administration is agreed upon; (2) should Pakistan sign the Agreements with a condition that the Soviet

Union will cooperate with Pakistan in framing a new administration acceptable to the majority of Afghans before their final withdrawal and (3) sign the Agreement as it is as Pakistan was committed to do so and the introduction of any new element at this stage would give the impression that Pakistan was going back on its word which would spoil Islamabad's relations with Moscow even further.

Ghulam Ishaq Khan strongly supported the signing of the Accord. He is reported to have said "we cannot go back on what we had earlier agreed when dealing with a superpower. He suggested that five to six weeks remaining before the commencement of the withdrawl (May, 15) should be availed of to make intensive efforts to persuade the *Mujahideen* leaders to be more flexible on the question of the composition of the interim government. Mr. Agha Shahi was for signing the Agreement without any new conditions "It would be a mistake to miss the present unique opportunity of concluding an Afghanistan agreement" said Shahi[59]. Air Chief Marshal Zulfiqar also recommended that the agreements be signed. His reason for recommending the signing of the Agreement was that Pakistan had earlier on rejected the Soviet proposals of an interim administration in Afghanistan before their pullout and that it was too late now to reverse the decision[60]. Lieutenant General A.I. Akram also was of the same view.

I chose the middle option viz signing of the Accord with an understanding given in writing and accepted by the other party that the superpowers would make sincere efforts to form an interim administration before and even after the final withdrawal of Soviet troops. For without this the fighting would continue.

I had just returned from Moscow (March, 88) where I, as the Director General of the Institute of Strategic Studies, had been received individually by Mr. Georgi Arbatov, CPSU specialist on the United States, Mr. Y. Primakov from the Academy of Sciences and Mr. Chernenko, the deputy of Mr. Anatoly Dobrynin. They were all very frank in admitting that the Soviet Union had made a mistake in sending its troops into Afghanistan. They went on to tell me that communism would not succeed in Afghanistan because the people there were deeply religious and illiterate. According to them a fragmented tribal society each considering itself independent of the other was not a fertile ground for a socialist state.

The most important point which they told me and which I conveyed to President Zia was that the Soviets would be withdrawing their troops from Afghanistan whether Pakistan signed the Geneva Accord or not. Mr. Chernenko also made a cryptic remark "Pakistan is trying to get the best but would end up by getting the worst", implying that if Pakistan insisted on raising new issues, the Soviet Union would withdraw its forces on its own term and the adversarial relationship between USSR and Pakistan could further deteriorate because of Pakistan's intransigence. He was not too far wrong. This was perhaps intended to put pressure on Pakistan not to raise any extraneous issues at this stage. General Zia, of-course, took this threat in his stride. He had been threatened several times before by Gorbachev's predecessor but threatening statements by the Kremlin leadership never made him alter his strong support for the Afghan *Mujahideen*. He did, however, see the advantage of making the Soviet and the Kabul regime commit themselves to the formation of a provisional administration acceptable to the Afghan people before the Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan.

Prime Minister Junejo was in a hurry. He wanted to add one more item to the list of achievements of the semi-civilian government which he was heading. Besides, like so many others in Pakistan, he wanted to see the end to the conflict in Afghanistan and the return of the millions of Afghan refugees to their country. He too must have believed that once the Soviet troops were out of Afghanistan the Kabul regime would be removed by the *Mujahideen* in a matter of weeks if not in days. Peace would return to Afghanistan and the Afghan refugees would go back to their homes. He, therefore, decided not to place the pre-condition of the formation of an interim administration before the withdrawal of the Soviet troops.

According to Zain Noorani, "Pakistan received messages from a large number of friendly countries, including a number of Muslim States, which impressed upon it the suitability of signing the agreement. They shared Pakistan's concern for the formation of the transitional government and expressed their support, for it. At the same time they made it clear that in their opinion, it was essential that Pakistan while pressing for it should not carry it to such a breaking point which would give an opportunity to the Soviet Union to go back on the commitment to withdraw their troops from 15 May. Pakistan did not make the formation of an

interim government a condition for signing the Agreement but in no uncertain terms did express its concern if that was not done. "We have delinked the question of signing the Agreements with the formation of the transitional government in Kabul .... but it remains one of the two concerns, action on which is still required, firstly an interim administration and secondly simultaneous cut off of aid" said Noorani at the continuing talks at Geneva[61].

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The last sessions of the Geneva negotiations began on 1 March, 1988 and lasted six weeks because of a non-agreement on the question of arms supplies to the Kabul regime and the *Mujahideen*. Secretary of State George Shultz stated that along with the withdrawal and a halt to the American aid to the *Mujahideen* the Soviets too should end the supply of weapons to the Kabul army. Kremlin did not want to nor did it feel obliged to stop military assistance to the Afghan government which it recognised as the lawful government in Afghanistan. They, in addition, had a Treaty of Peace and Friendship with that government which made it binding for them to provide assistance when requested.

The United States continued to press the issue of cessation of military aid to both the parties simultaneously. It goes to the credit of the Reagan Administration that they did try to reduce the conflagration in Afghanistan by asking Gorbachev to accept the necessity of a negative symmetry ie stoppage of military aid to both the belligerents. Zain Noorani, leader of Pakistan's delegation at Geneva, sent back a report to Islamabad saying that USA was willing to accept a reciprocal halt to the military supplies[62]. Gorbachev, however, rejected the negative symmetry proposal. He had taken the bold decision to withdraw his troops and had admitted the mistake of sending the military contingent into Afghanistan but he had not renounced Soviet interests in its southern neighbour. He was still adamant in propping up a pro-Soviet regime albeit not with Soviet troops but with Soviet weapons.

Pakistan, presumably, at the behest of USA, but very correctly, also raised the question of simultaneously ending military supplies to the two antagonists before putting down their signatures on the Geneva Accord. Pakistan's Prime Minister

Junejo confirms that Pakistan wanted a negative symmetry but had to give in to the decision of the two superpowers of continuing their weapons supply to both the belligerents[63]. General Zia also wanted an end to the military aid to the Kabul regime as he had not given up hopes of the *Mujahideen* achieving a military victory. Most of the Afghan leaders were not in favour of a negative symmetry as according to them they would be placed at a disadvantage as the Soviets would dump a considerable amount of weapons before the withdrawal. The *Mujahideen* on the other hand would not have the ability to store too many weapons to continue the fight against Najib. A very major stock pile of arms and ammunition for the *Mujahideen* had unfortunately been blown up and its immediate replacement was not possible.

Another proposal made by Secretary of State, George Shultz, that both guarantors should stop military aid for three months was rejected by Shevardnadze[64]. Washington refused to act as a guarantor unless the issue of military aid was amicably resolved.

Another month went by before General Zia could announce, on 7 April, 1988 that both superpowers have agreed to a 'positive symmetry' i.e: both USSR and USA would continue to provide weapons to their Afghan allies. Though not a satisfactory arrangement at all, as it ensured a continuation of the conflict, the last hurdle was at last removed and the Agreements were now ready for signature.

On 17 April, 1988 the historic documents were signed at Geneva[65]. The Accord consisted of four instruments:

1. *Instrument 1* was signed between the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the Republic of Afghanistan. This pertained to the principles of mutual relations in particular on non-interference and non-intervention in each other's internal affairs. (This aspect of the Accord was being insisted upon more by the Kabul regime than by Pakistan as the *Mujahideen* had been operating from inside Pakistan).

2. *Instrument 2* was signed between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the United States of America. This concerned the giving of guarantees by both superpowers that there would be no intervention or interference in the internal affairs of the high contracting parties. (Thus two out of the four instruments were more to the liking of Soviets and Kabul authorities than

those in power in Islamabad as it meant that the sanctuaries for the *Mujahideen* would no longer be east of the Durand Line).

3. *Instrument 3* was signed between Pakistan and Afghanistan on the voluntary return of refugees. An essential element in which Pakistan was vitally concerned but which would only come into effect if the proper environment prevailed in Afghanistan, which was unlikely in the near future.

4. *Instrument 4* was signed between the USSR and Afghanistan specifying the time frame for the withdrawal of the Soviet troops from Afghanistan. The de-induction was to commence on 15 May. The Soviet military contingent was to be totally pulled out within 9 months with one half leaving Afghanistan by 15 August, 1988.

While signing the Geneva Accord, USSR, USA and Pakistan once again reiterated their respective concerns. Edward Shevardnadze emphasized the point that the Geneva Accord does not permit supporting any political or other group by one of the contracting parties against the government of another contracting party. George Shultz repeated USA's right to provide weapons to the *Mujahideen* if the Soviets continue to stock pile arms and ammunition in Afghanistan. Zain Noorani reflected the views of his government by saying that the Afghan people be given the right to freely determine their own political, economic and social systems.

A separate Memorandum of Understanding was signed by all parties to permit the functioning of the representative of the Secretary General of the United Nations and all personnel assigned to assist him, in their task of over-seeing the implementation of the Geneva Accord. It was known as the 5th Document. The Secretary General of the UN appointed Major General Rauli Helminen of Finland as deputy representative and Mr. Benon Sevan as the alternate representative[66]. They were to be assisted by fifty officers drawn from Austria, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Fiji, Ghana, Ireland, Nepal, Poland and Sweden. The duration of their duty was twenty months and it would cost the UN $7.8 million per year. It expired in December, 1990 and was extended by another three months.

The Response to The Accord

George Shultz, US Secretary of State did not consider the

Geneva Accord to be perfect but 'as practical people' he thought it could 'achieve important ends'[67]. Zia while addressing the Parliament said 'all doubts have been removed implying that Pakistan was now ready to sign the agreement. He called it a 'historic event'[68] and advanced three reasons for the decision of the Soviets to withdraw their forces (1) unity of the Islamic countries (2) sacrifice and steadfastness of the people of Pakistan and (3) efforts of the United Nations.

As regards its implementation General Zia went on to say that Pakistan would try its best to fulfil the Geneva Accord without any effect on the Afghan *Mujahideen*'s effort inside Afghanistan "The *Mujahideen* should and would continue to fight and topple the Kabul regime"[69]. Said Zia. General Zia's statement appeared to be in direct contradiction to Instrument 1 (non-interference) of the Accord which Pakistan had signed only a few weeks ago. But since he continued to deny that Pakistan was arming or training the *Mujahideen* his statement that the *Mujahideen* would continue to fight was only an expression of a fact. Junejo felt that though the Geneva Accord was not excellent but it was the best in the circumstances"[70]. Perez de Cuellar called it a "most significant achievement - a major stride in the efforts to bring peace to Afghanistan"[71].

Tehran termed the Geneva agreements "without any value"[72]. The *Mujahideen* had been opposing the talks from the very beginning and so they rejected the Accord outrightly. This made it virtually impossible for Pakistan to abide by the articles in Instrument 1 pertaining to non-intervention. Even if Islamabad had the will to do so, it could not prevent the armed Afghan nationals from crossing and re-crossing the international border. The Pushtuns, in particular, have traditionally carried weapons and going without a rifle for an adult Afghan would be like going without clothes. They could not have been disarmed nor could they be prevented from crossing the border even if the entire Pakistan army was deployed. General Zia had expressed his inability to do so earlier on and had suggested to the Soviets to try and stop the flow of Afghans across the border if they could do so. They tried and failed because they did not have adequate forces to deploy all along the Pak-Afghan border. They also did not want to induct anymore troops then they already had.

Iran-based *Mujahideen* also rejected the Geneva Accord

because they had not been a party to it and so it was not binding on them to adhere to any of the provisions of the agreement. Because of the fact that USA was one of the main backers of the Agreements, Iran did not want to be associated with it nor did they intend to pay any heed to its instruments.

At a nuclear free-zone-conference in East Berlin, in June 1988, the author was accosted by Yuli Voronstov, the Soviet deputy foreign minister. Pointing a finger at me he said "General you are violating the Geneva Accord by permitting your territory to be used for supply of weapons to the rebels" I replied Mr. Voronstov, "it is your government and that of the United States which has agreed to the 'positive symmetry'. How do you except the weapons to reach the freedom fighters. Even if they are dropped by air they will have to pass over Pakistan's air space". He cut the conversation short and walked away.

And so all the four signatories knew that they would be violating the Geneva Accord. The Soviets left behind military hardware worth more than one billion dollars to put more steel in the back of Najibullah. They even did not hesitate to use their air force, from bases inside Soviet territory, to retake the town of Kunduz in northern Afghanistan, occupied by the *Mujahideen* in August, 1988. The United States continued to send military aid to the anti-communist elements - though there were reports that the supplies were reduced or even stopped for a period of six months at a very critical period.(February, 1989 to May, 1989 when the Jalalabad offensive was on). Pakistan remained a conduit for weapons meant for the partisans. The Kabul regime intensified their efforts to crush the rebellion and did not hesitate to violate the border with Pakistan at will. the *Mujahideen* continued to fight against the regime. The Geneva Accord was therefore a dead letter ab-initio.

A Critical Analysis

Four issues related to the Geneva negotiations need analysing to see if the results achieved could not have been arrived at much earlier without jeopardising Pakistan's national interests. These were: (1) not agreeing to have face-to-face talks with the Kabul regime; (2) insisting on a very short time frame for the withdrawal of Soviet troops; (3) linking the formation of an acceptable interim government with the return of Russian forces at a very late stage and (4) excluding the *Mujahideen* from the talks. The question

that has arisen amongst certain scholars and political analysts is whether a certain amount of flexibility by the government of Pakistan during the talks, could have brought about the withdrawal of the Soviet troops from Afghanistan earlier than the time it finally took. Also whether the right of self determination for the Afghan people should have been part of the negotiations from the very beginning. Different opinions have been expressed by various politicians, journalists and bureaucrats about the rigid stance taken by the government which caused a great deal of delay and the inability of national authorities to solve the basic cause of the Afghan conflict.

Direct Versus Indirect Talks

It was Babrak Karmal, who, on 11 January, 1980, proposed direct negotiations between Afghanistan and Pakistan. The indirect talks between them began in June 1982. They were again suspended for ten months from 17 December, 1985 to June, 1986 because Kabul once again insisted that the two delegations should engage in face to face parleys. Pakistan, as before, rejected the proposals and the negotiations continued with a slight modification in the format. Almost three years were thus lost in an unnecessary quibble over the procedure to be followed.

The questions that arise are: Did Pakistan gain anything by insisting on holding indirect talks? Would acting otherwise, in the circumstances then prevailing, have been harmful to Pakistan's national interest?

Islamabad, of-course, was principally correct in not recognising a regime that had been implanted by an outside power whose armed forces were still inside the country. But while adhering to this principled stand it could have shown some flexibility in entering into negotiations with its representatives directly while making it clear that by doing so it will not amount to recognising the regime in Kabul. Pakistan after all had not broken off diplomatic relations with Afghanistan. Its charge d' affaires was still in Kabul. Afghanistan's envoy was not only in Islamabad, but its consul general was in Karachi, both engaged in normal diplomatic activity. The OIC had given Pakistan the mandate to meet with representatives of the Kabul regime and try to arrive at a political settlement.

Afghanistan was still a member of the United Nations. Its

delegates were attending all UN sponsored activities along with their Pakistani counterparts. Precedents did exist where inspite of not recognising a regime direct talks have been held between two adversaries. Democratic Kampuchea headed by Prince Norodom Sihanouk continued to meet Hun Sen, the Vietnamese installed leader, in Paris. United States did not recognise the Peoples Republic of China till very late but did not hesitate in talking to PRC officials directly.

Unfortunately Pakistan did not have the political stature, the military clout nor the economic capacity to handle the Afghan question independently. It had to mobilise world opinion against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. It required military assistance to help the *Mujahideen* and to strengthen its own defences. It could not bear the economic burden of the surging Afghan refugee population alone. It therefore had to acquiesce to the interests of its friends and allies. The United States, China, Saudi Arabia and other donor countries would have been less forthcoming with their support if Pakistan went against their aims and objectives in this region. The most important of all, it had to keep the armed Afghan *Mujahideen* in Pakistan in good humover. Agha Shahi admits that in 1981 he was amenable to direct talks but Zia told him that Pakistan's backers were seriously concerned about such a format. Agha Shahi went on to say that US Secretary of State Alexander Haig had expressed his deep misgivings to him in April, 1981 of starting even indirect talks.

What could Pakistan have done in such a situation? To expedite the negotiations Pakistan could have agreed to hold direct negotiations with Kabul making it quite clear to the UN special representative that by doing so it was not recognising the Kabul regime. After-all that is what it finally did when it sat down on the same table and signed the same piece of document along with Abdul Wakil below which was written Government of Afghanistan.

Pakistan's objectives may have been achieved earlier by bending its principled stand a little.

Time Frame for Withdrawal

The Kabul regime proposed a time frame of four years in December, 1985 for the withdrawal of Soviet troops. Pakistan

wanted the retreat to be completed in four months. Russian soldiers finally left in three years and two months after the proposal was first made.

What was the rationale behind the insistence of a very short time table for withdrawal of Soviet forces. The United States, in particular, was very keen that the Soviets be forced to leave in a hurry so that they suffer the same humiliation as the Americans suffered at the hands of the Vietnamese in 1976. The real reason for asking the Soviets to de-induct their military contingent in a matter of months if not weeks was that the Kremlin should not be given an opportunity to help the Kabul forces to expand their hold over the areas under the control of the *Mujahideen*. This was indeed an important consideration in deciding on the time table but it was based on a wrong premise.

It was originally expected that after the signing of the Geneva Accord both USA and USSR would stop giving military aid to their proxies. That being so the longer the Soviets took in withdrawing their forces from 'D' Day the greater the chances for the Soviet/Kabul forces to push the *Mujahideen* further back. But that was not to be the case. The *Mujahideen* continued their resistance against both the Kabul and Soviet troops even after the Geneva Accord had been signed. They did so for 10 months. They would have done so for much longer if the withdrawal time table was spread over a few years. The fighting infact intensified after the agreement was announced. Both the superpowers continued to supply weapons during the withdrawal. So it did not matter if the pull out took 10 months or more. The result would have been the same - a stalemate.

Another reason put forward by a reliable military source was that the *Mujahideen* did not have the ability to stock more than six months of arms and ammunition hence there was a need for the Soviets to withdraw within that time or soon thereafter. There is much weight in this reasoning but it is again based on the assumption of negative symmetry. Since that did not come about the stocks could have been replenished from time to time.

Since the *Mujahideen* were not a party to the negotiations and it was well known that they would not abide by its instruments insistence on a short time frame was more academic than of much practical value. More so as the time taken in negotiating this aspect of the Accord took nearly the same time as envisaged in the original four-year proposal.

Interim Administration

The third issue which came up for discussion early in the negotiations, but was dropped soon thereafter was the question of the formation of an interim political arrangement before the withdrawal of the Soviet troops.

This was first proposed by the USSR in December, 1987 Pakistan and its main supporter the United States rejected it. They did not agree to linking the withdrawal to the establishment of a provisional administration in Kabul. The Soviets then dropped the linkage clause. This was an opportunity which Pakistan missed. Its insistence on a Soviet withdrawal without ensuring a smooth transfer of power to a more acceptable government was probably based on the blind faith it had on the military prowess of the *Mujahideen*. General Zia was convinced then that the Kabul regime would be toppled by the *Mujahideen* soon after the Soviet troops withdrawal. That is where Pakistan and its intelligence agencies went wrong. They should have assessed the military situation more objectively. If they had done so, they would have realised the inability of the *Mujahideen* to overrun well defended city fortresses. The loyalty of the Afghan armed forces to Najibullah was also misread.

General Zia kept supporting a military solution and gave little attention to working out a political alternative to the Kabul regime till just before the final withdrawal notice by Gorbachev. The proposal of an interim administration before the withdrawal was sound but it was introduced too late in the proceedings.

Trying to make the belligerents agree on an interim administration would have been an uphill task no doubt and could have delayed the withdrawal but the final solution would have ensured a measure of peace and an early return of the Afghan refugees.

Participation of The Mujahideen

The main actors on the Afghan stage were the Kabul regime and the *Mujahideen*, others were playing the supporting role. It would have been appropriate for the *Mujahideen* to have participated in the Geneva negotiations from the very beginning. This was attempted by the special three-member committee formed under the directions of the OIC but no progress could be made as the Kabul regime refused to talk to the 'bandits'.

The attempt should not have been given up. The matter of *Mujahideen* participation in the Geneva negotiations should have been pursued. Kabul would of - course have refused to talk to the 'rebels' at first and that would have delayed the matter. But as military pressure against the Kabul regime intensified and greater areas came under control of the *Mujahideen* Karmal may have been forced to accept the presence of the *Mujahideen* at the Geneva talks. Agha Shahi did pursue this at the Taif OIC Summit in February, 1981. He spoke to several *Mujahideen* leaders to form a political front. This would have made it easier to persuade the UN mediator to consult the *Mujahideen*. But they remained too divided. It was not until 1985 that a nominal facade of unity was presented to the world.

Of-course the sine-qua-non for such an arrangement was the unity amongst the *Mujahideen* themselves. Their participation would have been meaningless if what they agreed to in Geneva would immediately be rejected by the Afghan leaders in Peshawar and Tehran.

General Mirza Aslam Beg, the Chief of Army Staff while discussing Pakistan's Afghan policy in the '80s highlighted the fact that the political dimension of the Afghan conflict was not given adequate attention. Emphasis was placed on seeking a military solution and on the withdrawal of the Soviet troops from Afghanistan. In-depth study and serious efforts on promoting an alternative to the Kabul regime was not made in time.

Political Measures by The Kabul Regime

Kremlin was quite anxious about the fact that Karmal, and later Najib, had not been able to broaden their base amongst the Afghan people. They were, therefore, constantly impressing upon the Afghan rulers that they must adopt measures and take steps to reach out to the people and try to win them over by means other than military force. On the advice of his mentors Babrak established a National Fatherland Front (NFF) with the purpose of winning over all those who had liberal and progressive ideas and were more likely to accept the socio-economic reforms which the PDPA was trying to introduce in Afghanistan. The formation of the NFF was announced on 29 December, 1980[73] - a year after Karmal took over the reigns of government in Kabul. It was designed to be a coalition of groups from different strata of society. Journalists, school and college teachers, university professors,

businessmen, industrialists, trade unions, various youth organisations, pro-government *ulemas* (to give it a religious touch) and even some tribal elders were 'purchased' to join the Front. Inspite of this broad spectrum of the Afghan people the first session of the NFF was poorly attended.

About a dozen subsidiary 'progressive' organisation were also formed to try and include different segments of society. Students, intellectuals, professionals and prominent citizens were encouraged to join these newly created groups. The Afghan tribal custom of calling a *Jirgah* to approve proposals made by those in authority was also made a part of the National Fatherland Front methodology. However, very few tribal leaders attended the *Jirgah* called by the NFF in June, 1981. Some of those who did attend were eliminated by the *Mujahideen*. Due partly to fear of reprisals and partly to a dislike for the PDPA the NFF did not become a popular front supportive of government policies.

The charter adopted at its first session was to popularise the PDPA's policies amongst the Afghan people. Persuasion instead of force was to be used ensuring that Islamic rituals and practice were not violated and nothing against the Holy Quran was to be advocated.

The next step to 'democratise' the government organs was to hold local *Jirgahs*, giving them the administrative authority to conduct local affairs including dispensing justice in accordance with the Islamic Shariah and the traditional tribal code.

Inspite of these efforts Karmal conceded to the PDPA Central Committee at its 9th plenary session in August, 1982 that the party organisation was still weak in most of the provinces, "party unity had improved but still insufficient, the party was still to gain the trust and confidence of the masses[74]" said Karmal. At this conference he claimed that the PDPA members had risen to 70,000 members.

In February, 1983 Babrak Karmal offered to hold direct negotiations with Iran and Pakistan to try and settle the Afghan issue peacefully - but there were no takers as both of his neighbours did not recognise his government.

In 1984 DRA set up a network of elected 'local organs of power' to administer laws and mobilise popular support. The PDPA claimed to have 30 provincial party committees, 61 provincial and

city committees, 207 district and sub-district committees and 3,000 primary committees. These figures were not based on the real situation on the ground as it was acknowledged by all independent analysts that 80 to 90 percent of the country-side was controlled by the *Mujahideen* and that Kabul's writ only ran in the major cities or along major highways. To expect so many political organs of the PDPA to actually function amounted to burying one's head in the sand. More so when Karmal claimed at the 20th anniversary of the founding of the PDPA in January, 1985 that the party organisation had spread to every nook and corner of Afghanistan. While saying this he contradicted himself by admitting that the resistance still commanded the active or tacit support of a majority of Afghans. The broad masses had not been attracted to the revolution. The weakest links were the 'village circles'[75]. In May, 1986 Babrak Karmal was replaced by the dreaded Secret Service Chief, Dr. Mohammad Najibullah.

As the years dragged on and no end to the military conflict was in sight and as the losses were mounting and international pressure was increasing Najibullah, made what he considered to be a very significant announcement. In the first week of January, 1987 with a great deal of outward manifestations he launched his national reconciliation programme. This included: (1) unilateral cease-fire with effect from the first of January, 1987, Afghan troops would not take any military action against the 'rebels' unless it be to defend themselves when attacked; (2) the regime was prepared to share power with even those who were against the PDPA government in Kabul, the emphasis being on sharing power and not handing over power. A few unimportant ministries to some *Mujahideen* leaders or field commanders was the bait for accepting the call for a cease-fire; (3) a general amnesty for all those presently engaged in counter-revolutionary activities; (4) protection and promotion of the historic, national and cultural traditions of the Afghans and (5) respect for and adherence to the sacred religion of Islam[76], however the clergy were not to use religious places and gathering for any anti-national propaganda or as a tool against the interests of the DRA.

In addition to these measures the name of the country was changed by dropping the word 'democratic'. It now became just the Republic of Afghanistan making it more acceptable to those who linked the word 'democratic' to all those countries which were communist - oriented. The red colour of the flag was given

up and the original tri-colour black, red and green was brought back. All proceedings of the government were to begin with the Quranic verse: "In the name of Allah, the Most Benevolent, the Most Merciful". (Muslims all over the world usually begin their work with these words).

The national reconciliation programme of Najibullah, however, met with little success as the *Mujahideen* did not accept the call for a cease-fire. The unilateral cease-fire could not hold as soldiers could not sit back and be shot at. They did retaliate.

Very few, if any at all, laid down their arms to take advantage of the general amnesty. The ministries of healthy and population welfare did not interest the *Mujahideen* leaders nor were they attractive enough to the field commanders. They wanted all or nothing. The promise to adhere to the practices of Islam and the traditions of the Afghans was not good enough. They were following that already. The cosmetic changes announced made no impact on the resistance movement. The struggle against Najibullah and the PDPA increased.

Peace Efforts by USSR

Moscow stepped up its diplomatic activities to make the *Mujahideen* agree to a power-sharing with Najib. Yuli Voronstov, the Deputy Foreign Minister of USSR, paid a visit to Tehran in January, 1989 and met the leaders of the eight-party *Mujahideen* alliance based in Iran. This step was not appreciated by Hikmatyar and Rabbani. They criticised the Soviets for holding separate talks with the *Mujahideen* in Pakistan and Iran. Hikmatyar asked the Afghan leaders in Iran to come to Pakistan and work out a common formula before initiating a dialogue with Moscow. "Soviet bid to divide Afghans will be foiled[77]" said Hikmatyar.

Voronstov then flew to Islamabad to have his second round of talks with the Afghan leaders based in Pakistan (The first round had been held with them in Taif in December, 1988). The Afghan delegation was led by the chairman of the Islamic Unity of Afghan *Mujahideen* (IUAM), Sibghatullah Mojeddedi supported by Pir Syed Ahmad Gailani. The Afghan parties in Iran were represented by Mohammad Karim Khalili. Two rounds of talks were held in the foreign office but they ended in a deadlock as Voronstov was insisting on acceptance of a cease-fire and a power-sharing with

the Kabul regime. On the other hand terms laid down by Mojeddedi were: immediate, total and unconditional withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan; removal of the puppet regime in Kabul; establishment of an Islamic order; restoration of Islamic identity and non-aligned status for Afghanistan. Voronstov was told not to hold separate meetings with the Afghan *Mujahideen*[78].

Voronstov, while in Islamabad, had several meetings with Foreign Minister, Sahabzada Yaqub Khan and paid courtesy calls on the President and the Prime Minister in his efforts to bring about a political settlement in Afghanistan. He had earlier met ex-King Zahir Shah in Rome. There too he did not achieve much success as the former monarch also believed that a government which would include the communists would not be acceptable to the Resistance[79]. The former head of state also apparently told Voronstov that Najibullah had no popular support in Afghanistan as such his remaining in power would not be conducive to the formation of a broad based-government.

Voronstov, after his two rounds of talks with the *Mujahideen*, and while still in Islamabad, blamed the *Mujahideen* for all the bloodshed at a press conference. In saying so he touched upon a raw nerve. He failed to understand the Afghan psychology. By being arrogant and threatening towards the *Mujahideen* he angered them to an extent that it became a matter of honour and a question of 'revenge' for an insult inflicted by a *Kafir*. Mojeddedi responded by declaring "No more talks with the Soviet Union[80]".

The Soviets continued with their 'peace offensive'. They proposed a three-stage plan to resolve the Afghan problem. They suggested a peace conference in which all warring factions would be represented as the first step. This could be followed by a formation of a steering council which in turn could set up a broad-based coalition government[81]. None of these proposals were pursued further. The Soviets wanted to withdraw with honour, save the Kabul regime and ensure a cease-fire.

The visit of Edward Shevardnadze, the Soviet Foreign Minister, to Islamabad on 4 February, 1989 was to speed up the political process for bringing peace to a war torn Afghanistan. In a joint statement issued at the end of the meeting the two sides confirmed their intention to work toward a broad-based government in Afghanistan. They also accepted the need for the Afghans to decide their own future without outside interference.

The requirement of creating peaceful conditions inside Afghanistan was also felt to enable the Afghan refugees to go back in safety. As expected the statements about finding a political solution and not a military one was repeated knowing full well that the *Mujahideen* would not stop fighting and lay down their arms just because Pakistan and the Soviet Union did not want a military solution.

Shevardnadze also made it clear that in any future set up the interests of the Communist Party and of the present regime in Kabul would have to be taken into account. He also suggested the calling of an international conference on Afghanistan and requested the United Natión Secretary General to renew his efforts for a political settlement. It is believed that Shevardnadze was willing to ask Najibullah to step down to facilitate Pakistan in accepting the participation of some 'good Muslims' from the present regime in the provisional broad-based government. That opportunity, according to the Ambassador of a friendly mission in Islamabad, was missed by the government of Pakistan[82].

The Afghan Mujahideen - Political Activities

Efforts at uniting the different factions of the *Mujahideen* leaders living in Peshawar and Iran had been going on since they migrated from their country. The first such attempt was the creation of a National Rescue Front which was established in Peshawar by Professor Rabbani. He claimed to be representing eight right-wing groups. It lasted only six weeks as the leaders of each of the groups differed with each other.

This was followed by a two-party coalition called the Movement of Islamic Revolution. It comprised of the Hizb-e-Islami (Hikmatyar) and the Jamiat-e-Islami (Rabbani) and came into existence on 24 September, 1978. For uniting together they received $2 million from the Arabs[83]. But when the money ran out, which took only a few months, they separated again.

The third attempt in January, 1980 attracted six parties which agreed to form a coalition. The leaders who decided to work together this time were Hikmatyar, Rabbani, Khalis, Gailani, Nabi Mohammadi and Mojeddedi. The attraction was yet another offer of financial assistance from the Arabs. This coalition also did not last for more than a few weeks. Hikmatyar withdrew as he was not prepared to work with Gailani and Mojeddedi. The other

five, however, formed another coalition called the Islamic Alliance for the Liberation of Afghanistan (IALA). Their hopes of being recognised as a government-in-exile by the OIC, however, did not materialise and by April, 1981 it was dissolved. Babrakzai, a former Afghan Chief Justice also tried to form a revolutionary council but failed to get it off the ground.

In the summer of 1981 two more coalitions came into existence (old wine in new bottles) each called the Islamic Unity of Afghan *Mujahideen* (IUAM). Western countries divided them into moderates (Gailani, Mojeddedi and Mohammadi) and the so-called fundamentalists (Hikmatyar, Rabbani, Khalis and Sayyaf). The 'fundamentalists' were joined by another three, Nasarullah Mansoor, Rafiullah Mohsin and Mohammad Mir.

Lieutenant General Fazle-Haq, Governor of the North West Frontier Province and a close confidante of General Zia, finally squeezed them into six political parties who could act as coordinators for their respective groups inside Afghanistan and amongst the Afghan refugees. Since the aid and supply of weapons depended on the strength and effectiveness of the Afghan groups each tried to gain as many supporters as is possible. This resulted in a 'gold rush' wherein every political party began attracting as many groups and refugees as they could.

Finally the Islamic Unity of Afghan *Mujahideen* of 7 parties was formed, which included Hizb-e-Islami (Hikmatyar), Hizb-e-Islami (Khalis), Jamiat-e-Islami (Rabbani), Ittehad-e-Islami (Sayyaf), National Islamic Front of Afghanistan (Gailani), Harakat (Mohammadi) and Nijat (Mojeddedi).

Inspite of this the Kabulis were not very enamoured of the Afghan leaders in Peshawar. Edward Gorman, a noted journalist who visited Kabul, just after the withdrawal, found the Kabulis craving for peace but they feared a government run by Gulbadin Hikmatyar. According to them he would run a Khomeini style dictatorship and an orgy of revenge and killings would follow. An educated Afghan lady was also fearful of Hikmatyar but acknowledged his strength. According to her "He will be another Khomeini but he is the only one who can get rid of Najib[85]". The residents of the city, felt that the Kabul regime would survive without Soviet military assistance but they were tired of the war. Gorman quotes a middle level trader Taj Mohammad from Chicken Street in Kabul who is reported to have said "we want

peace and it is not important who comes". Abdus Salam repeats the same feelings to Maureen Johnson of Associated Press, "we just want peace no Russians, no *Mujahideen*, no government, just peace"[86]. The latter expression appears to be more close to reality. Neither Najib nor any of the leaders who advocate more bloodshed would be acceptable by a war-weary citizen in Kabul or in any other area of Afghanistan.

Formation of The Afghan Interim Government (AIG)

As the date for the last troops to leave Afghanistan neared the *Mujahideen* leaders in Peshawar began their attempt to from an interim government which could be placed in Kabul after Najib's fall. Pressurised, persuaded and encouraged by Pakistan, the IUAM agreed to assemble a nominated '*shura*' (consultative council). Efforts in this direction began in January, 1989 by the UN special representative, Benon Sevan, but it took nearly a month before the representatives of various Afghan elements could meet. Sevan called the shura a first step towards a formal intra-Afghan dialogue[87] by which he implied direct negotiations with the PDPA at some stage. Iranians were also of the opinion that there had to be a role for the PDPA[88].

The issues which had to be sorted out were: the total strength of the shura; the allocation of the number of representatives from each party and from those Afghans who had not joined any of the recognised groups; the real aim and purpose of the consultative council; the method of selecting the members of the proposed AIG including its head and what would be the responsibilities of the Afghan Interim Government so selected.

The question of the total strength of the shura did not pose much of a problem, It was agreed that the shura would consist of 500 members. The breakdown, as far as the Peshawar-based parties was concerned was also accepted without much discussion. Each Peshawar-based party had the right to nominate 60 members to the consultative council making a total of 420. The eight-party Iran-based Afghan *Mujahideen*, who represented two million Afghan refugees, were given 60 seats, ie eight parties together were taken as one party and treated at par with a Peshawar-based single party.

Those Afghan leaders in Peshawar, opposed to giving more than 60 seats to the Iran-based Afghan refugees argued that all

the Afghan refugees in Iran were not Shias. There were some Sunnis amongst them,as well hence their representation based on the percentage of Shias in Afghanistan would not be correct. According to them only two parties out of the Tehran-8 were of any significance. The remaining composed of a handful members only. The Afghan *Mujahideen* in Iran had also not been as active in the fighting as their co-citizens in Pakistan hence could not demand a large share. Moreover Central Afghanistan from where most of the Tehran-based Afghan groups came, had been relatively less affected by the fighting and lastly that the Tehran alliance made no worthwhile contribution to the war effort. Mohammad Karim Khalil, spokesman of the Tehran-8, refuted these charges. He agreed that the parties in Iran were not all Shias and that this should not be treated as a sectarian issue. He, however, maintained that the eight Afghan parties in Iran were all genuine and not in name only, though some were small and others big. Khalili was also adamant that the Afghan *Mujahideen* were active in Several provinces and were determined to continue the struggle against Najib. He claimed that they were as effective as those Afghan *Mujahideen* based in Pakistan.

Khalili was probably exaggerating the feats of 'his' *Mujahideen* but it must be remembered that the Peshawar-based *Mujahideen* were receiving a larger quantity of weapons than their comrades in Iran and were being fully supported by Pakistan and all its allies including a superpower. Iran on the other hand was engaged in a life and death struggle with Iraq. Hence the Afghan *Mujahideen* in Iran had to make do with what little Ayatollah Khomeini could spare from his war effort against Iraq[89].

Mohammad Karim Khalili representing the Afghan refugees in Iran, demanded 120 seats which was rejected by the four 'fundamentalist' parties. Mojeddidi, the then chairman of the IUAM went to Tehran to try and persuade the Afghans there to attend the shura. In order to broaden the base of the shura Mojeddidi accepted a figure between the 60 seats allotted and the 120 seats demanded by Iran-based Afghans. While there he signed an agreement allotting them 100 seats. This decision was not accepted. On his return he was replaced for taking a unilateral decision and the agreement signed by him at Tehran was made null and void. The real objective in this numbers game was to try and get as much support as possible for their own candidate

during the election in the shura for the Prime Ministership of the proposed AIG.

Hikmatyar wanted Sayyaf to head the proposed interim government. He could bank on 240 votes, as he had four conservative parties behind him each having 60 seats. Gailani was backing Mojeddidi as the top man but the three 'liberal' Afghan groups had only 180 representatives in the shura (60x3). By giving more than the originally allocated 60 seats to the Iran-based *Mujahideen* the moderates had hoped to tilt the scales in their favour as they would probably oppose Hikmatyar's candidate.

The Iranians had been on good terms with Hikmatyar initially but as he gravitated towards Saudi Arabia and the strongly Sunni Jamiat-e-Islami they began to distance themselves from him. Although the seats allocated to the Afghan refugees in Iran were raised later by Hikmatyar to 80 but he insisted that the additional 20 should be nominated by him. This was still not acceptable as their minimum demand was 100 and they did not agree to any nominations. The Soviets in the meantime made efforts to avoid the radical Islamic elements from having a major share in the proposed shura. Yuli Voronstov, visited Tehran and the Iranian Deputy Speaker Larijani went to Moscow. They may have persuaded the Iranian to keep the 'fundamentalists' from gaining primacy in any future setup in Afghanistan - utilising the anti-Saudi sentiments in Iran.

Gailani when questioned about the impasse created because of the Shia-Sunni factor, that had crept into the struggle for power replied "it is not a sectarian issue. It is the effectiveness in the field that was the main consideration, when allocating the number of seats to each group".

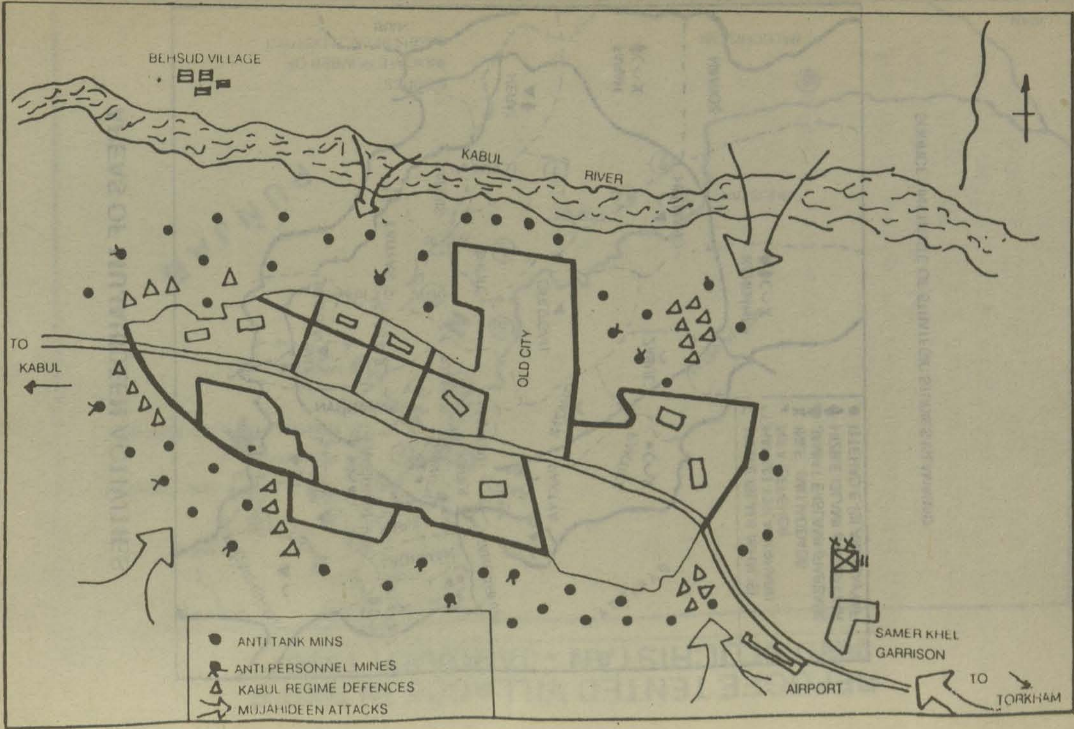
Considerable delay was caused because of the differences that arose amongst the two 'blocs' in the Afghan *Mujahideen* on the quantum of representation to the Tehran-based Afghan *Mujahideen*. Hikmatyar tried to break the deadlock by visiting Tehran on 26 January, 1989. Dr. Ali Akber Velayati, the Foreign Minister of Iran, assured Hikmatyar that Iran would extend all coôperation to the Peshawar-based *Mujahideen* so that they could carry out elections in the future and establish an Islamic rule"[90]. The Foreign Minister when questioned about the possibility of the Iran-based Afghans attending the proposed shura meeting said "we hope that the brothers will show maturity and the differences

will end",[91] but they did not. However, when the shura finally met at Madina-tul-Hujjaj in Rawalpindi the representatives of the eight-party Afghan alliance based in Tehran were not present. Some independent Shias, the most prominent being Mohsin, did. however, attend.

After a delay of over two weeks the shura finally met on 10 February, 1989. Afghan emigres from Europe and America attended. Some independent Afghan groups protested against being excluded. Most of the field commanders were conspicuous by their absence, only Jalaluddin Haqqani (JI), from Khost, was present. No 'good Muslims' came from Kabul regime controlled areas. Differences arose on the purpose of the meeting. Hikmatyar wanted this gathering to give a vote of confidence to the existing IUAM headed by Engineer Ahmad Shah (not to be confused with the famous freedom fighter Ahmad Shah Masud of Panjsher). The moderates wanted to form a totally new Afghan Interim Government. The second issue which created some heated discussion was whether it should be a 'presidential' form of government or a 'parliamentary' system. Finally they settled for the Pakistani model in 1988 where there were 'two power centres'. Hikmatyar did not agree to both the president and the prime minister sharing authority as according to him that would lead to friction[92]. But that is what it turned out to be. The office of the president was not provided for originally. This was raised by the moderates to try and get Mojeddidi elected as the head of the interim government leaving the office of the prime minister in the hands of the 'fundamentalists'.

The third issue that divided the leaders was the question of elections. While every one conceded the need for an elected interim government which would later organise free and fair elections inside and outside Afghanistan the mode of doing so remained a matter of dispute. Hikmatyar, whom the Western journalists blame for being a 'fascist', came out like a true democrat as far as the holding of elections was concerned. He, along with Rabbani, was wanting elections to be held within six months of the formation of the AIG. This was based on the assumption that within this period a substantive area of Afghanistan would have been liberated; a major city would have been freed and the interim government would be firmly established on Afghanistan soil. Unfortunately none of these predictions came true. Consequently the practicability of holding

JALALABAD OFFENSIVE

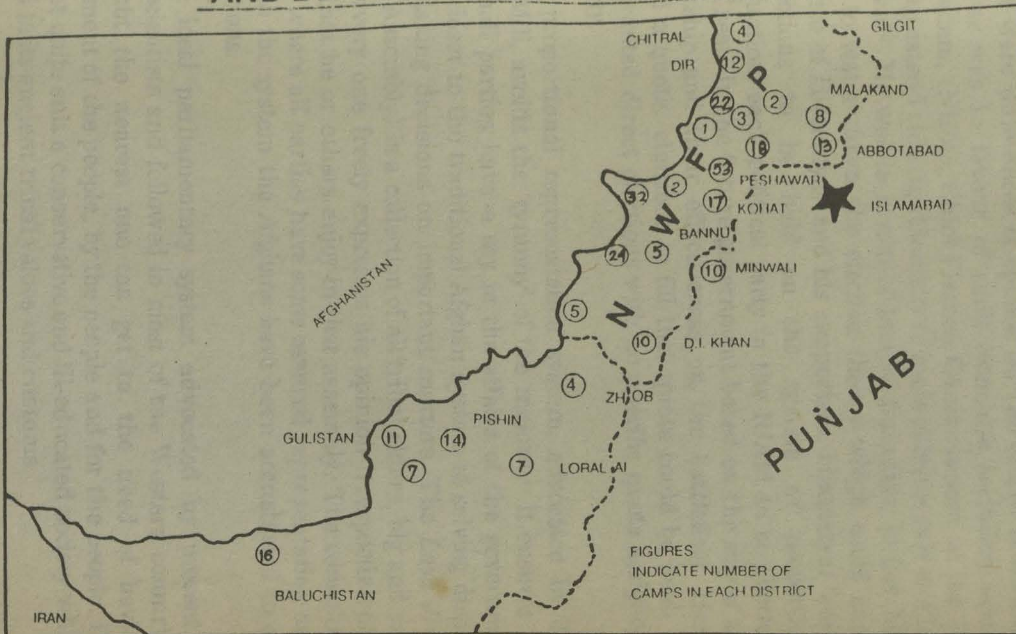


AREAS OF MUJAHIDEEN ACTIVITIES



SOURCE:- INSTITUTE OF STRATEGIC STUDIES ISLAMABAD

REFUGEE TENTED VILLAGES IN NWFP AND BLUCHISTAN - JANUARY, 1990



SOURCE: CHIEF COMMISSIONARATE FOR AFGHAN REFUGEES, GOVERNMENT OF PAKISTAN, ISLAMABAD

elections, with fighting still raging inside the country and the Iranian-based Afghan *Mujahideen* not willing to cooperate, was challenged.

There were differences of opinion on the extent of franchise. Hikmatyar was in favour of adult franchise including women while Gailani, (NIFA), Chief Election Commissioner in the AIG, wanted to extend this right initially to male citizens only and later to women[93]. He was in favour of limited franchise. In fact NIFA wanted to water down the election theory which could ensure dominance of Hikmatyar and his supporters. Hikmatyar wanted the elections to be held on the system of proportional representation, each political party in the IUAM to be allotted a quote of seats in the future government based on the size of their membership and their effectiveness on the battlefield. Having accepted a quota, elections to fill that quota could be held. The others wanted direct elections with no specific quota assigned to any party.

The proportional representation system, advocated by John Stuart Mill, avoids the 'tyranny' of the majority. It ensures that even small parties have a say in the affairs of the government. This is closer to the traditional Afghan system of solving disputes and of taking decisions on important matters. The *Loya Jirgah* (Grand Assembly) is a collection of all tribal elders, big and small, where every one freely expresses his opinion irrespective of the status that he or others enjoy in that assembly. The consultative council where all parties have some assured representation seems closer to the system the Afghans have been accustomed to since generations.

The ideal parliamentary system advocated by present day social scientists and followed in most of the Western countries is no doubt the nearest one can get to the need of having a government of the people, by the people and for the people. But it does not quite suit a conservative and ill-educated society which is yet tied to its ancient tribal values and customs.

The shura, which met after two weeks of intense negotiations on 10 February, was postponed indefinitely on 11 February, on the question of the representation of the Afghan *Mujahideen* in Iran. A fourteen hour long continuous session of the Islamic Unity of the Afghan *Mujahideen* could not settle this issue and ended by creating further disunity between its seven leaders.

Finally, pressure was applied by the few field commanders present on the Afghan leaders to come to some sort of an agreement. A smaller group of 14 members (two from each of the seven political parties) formed a commission and met under the freedom fighter Jalaluddin Haqqani. The *Mujahideen* leaders gave a written pledge that they would treat the commission's decision as binding which increased the chances of forming a government. The 14 members then cast their votes for the post of the president of the interim government. The person who got the highest vote was nominated as president, the one who got the next higher number of votes was made the prime minister and so it went down the line. The fact that the president, the prime minister and the foreign minister differed widely in their views were considered to be of no great concern. They were wrong. Because of this fact alone the chances of the AIG remaining intact were minimal.

The objectives of the AIG were basically to move into Afghanistan within one month and to hold elections within six months. Neither of these two could be achieved as the *Mujahideen* failed to capture any major city and were not able to establish themselves inside Afghanistan. Elections could also not be held as major differences existed on how to hold the elections and for what purpose. In the meantime Hikmatyar broke away from the AIG. The AIG itself stood dissolved as its life of one year had expired on 15 February, 1990.

The Hizb-e-Islami (Hikmatyar) enjoyed relative superiority in numbers, it was better organised and had a greater body of disciplined people. Hikmatyar should have shown greater magnanimity and flexibility to accommodate the demands of a few more seats in the shura which was being made by the Iran-based Alliance. For the greater good, the temporary gain of the senior-most slot in the AIG should have been given up. The proposed interim government was in any case a temporary arrangement. Election of a real shura, a new constitution and a full fledged government were to come later. Twenty additional, seats in an adhoc shura, to the Afghan brothers in Iran would have kept the Afghan firmament in place and given it a wider horizon.

Recognition of The AIG

The new government's first action was to demand a seat at the United Nations. It also asked all nations to give it recognition. However only Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Malaysia recognised the

Afghan Interim Government[94]

Different opinions were expressed in Pakistan whether the AIG should have been recognised by Pakistan or not. The pro-Zia elements, both amongst the politicians and in the armed forces were strongly in favour of recognising the interim government. They argued that the OIC had already suspended the membership of the Kabul regime and had asked all its members not to recognise the Soviet installed administration. As such the seat was lying vacant. Now that an Afghan shura had elected an interim government it had a right to take the place of the illegal Najib regime. Unless Pakistan recognised the AIG other countries would not follow. Since Najib was being backed to the hilt by the Soviets the *Mujahideen* needed to receive all the political and military support that could be given to them to enable them to oust Najibullah. Since Pakistan could not provide military aid the least they could do was to give them political recognition.

Lieutenant General Hamid Gul, the former ISI Chief, maintained that if Pakistan had recognised the AIG the results on the battlefield would also have been different as the morale of the freedom fighters would have gone up. They would have then succeeded in bringing down the regime in Kabul. Recognition would have also given them the right to officially ask for military and economic assistance and that would have increased pressure on Najib.

There is no doubt that General Zia would have recognised the AIG as he was fully committed to the Afghan cause and was deeply involved in trying to unite the different factions. Those very close to the President say that he met them often at his residence and the sittings continued some times throughout the night. During these meetings while he assured them of every support he also advised them to speak with one voice so that they could provide a credible alternative to the Soviet clients in Kabul. Now when the alternative had been formed he would have given it greater importance by recognising it.

His statement about wanting to say his prayers in Kabul also indicated his conviction that the *Mujahideen* will eventually be victorious and that military pressure along with political measures would be the answer. Having put all his eggs in the *Mujahideen* basket he would have certainly gone the whole way in recognising the interim government and then canvassing for their support in

different forums specially amongst all Muslim countries. Never afraid of any backlash, either from within or without, he would have disregarded any threat from any quarter. Any adverse consequences of recognising the AIG would have been not too high a price for him to pay for what he believed to be Pakistan's war being fought by the *Mujahideen*.

Mian Nawaz Sharif, the head of the Islami Jamhoori Ittehad (IJI) and Qazi Hussain Ahmad, the chief of the Jamiat-e-Islami Pakistan, both of whom are admirers of General Zia and would like to follow his Islamic policies were also in favour of recognising the AIG. (However, after becoming the Prime Minister of Pakistan in October, 1990 he chose to lay greater emphasis on seeking a political solution to the Afghan problem. He made no signs of recognising the AIG which, by then, had further lost credibility).

The Bhutto government, however, felt that it was premature to recognise the AIG because it was not broad-based enough. It did not include the representatives of the nine party alliance based in Iran nor was there any representation of the field commanders, Afghan refugees, intellectuals, emigres. No 'good Muslims' from inside Afghanistan had been included. Moreover the AIG did not exercise any effective control over any piece of territory in Afghanistan. Although the *Mujahideen* had been claiming over 90 percent of the area to be under their jurisdiction since the start of the conflict, they had not been able to 'liberate' any major city so far. The few provincial capitals they had captured changed hands every so often while other elements needed for law and order and for administering liberated areas were still missing. The infighting between the *Mujahideen* had not died down and it had to be seen whether the structure of the AIG would remain in tact.

What is the legal position with regards to the recognition of a government in exile? The criteria stated by the government of Pakistan does not appear to be universal. Democratic Kampuchea (DK) has been given a seat at the United Nations. It is recognised by all non-socialist states. But it neither controls any territory nor does it have any administrative set up in a liberated area of any significance. By virtue of being a member of the United Nations, its representatives sits in several United Nations organisations and are entitled to receive assistance from them. Ambassadors present their credentials to Prince Norodom Sihanouk in front of a

thatched 'palace' a few yards away from the Thai border but in Kumpuchean territory. His government is a shaky coalition of three factions each on the extremes of the political spectrum. He breaks bread with his erstwhile enemies, the Khmer Rouge, who have been instrumental in the cold blooded murder of his own children. He tenders his resignation as the head of his government every time some difference of opinion arises. But even then the DK is taken seriously. The important difference between Afghanistan and Kampuchea of course is that the head of Democratic Kampuchea was once the king of his country and a figure revered by many.

The other example is that of the PLO. Several Western countries call it a terrorist organisation. The United States hesitates to give its representatives permission to enter the country to attend the United Nations General Assembly sessions. It has no territory over which it has administrative control. It is faction-ridden and engaged in a life and death struggle to liberate its homeland from Israeli occupation. The Arab world, the Muslim nations and several other countries have even allowed the PLO to have its embassies in their capitals. SWAPO and UNITA fighting for their independence in Africa had been given recognition.

The real reason seems to be that Pakistan did not want to be a partisan to the infighting between the Afghan leaders. By recognising the AIG it would have angered the Iranians as the Afghan refugees in Iran had decided not to join the newly formed political set up. It would have tied Pakistan too closely with the policies of the Peshawar-based Afghans leaving it no flexibility to explore other options for finding a political and comprehensive settlement of the Afghan question. The government of Pakistan was also aware of the struggle for power within the AIG and were not sure how long it would remain as a unified body.

Sahabzada Yaqub Khan, while defending the government's decision not to recognise the AIG just yet proved it by pointing to the differences that had arisen within the AIG so soon after its formation. "Where would we have been now if we had recognised the Afghan Interim Government in its present shape"[95] said the Foreign Minister of Pakistan to the author informally.

It is difficult to say what could have been the outcome if the government of Pakistan had recognised the AIG but judging from hindsight Pakistan would have been greatly embarrassed if it had done so.

Post Geneva Accord

The Geneva Accord was quite comprehensive and could have assisted in bringing about peaceful conditions in Afghanistan. But, unfortunately, none of the high contracting parties were sincere in abiding by the terms of the agreement on which they had put their signatures on that auspicious day of 14 April, 1988. Each signatory was satisfied by having an article or para included in it which helped them to achieve their respective objective. The wordings of other parts of the document, though hammered out with great pain, did not matter as there was no intention of abiding by them any way.

The Geneva Accord, therefore, achieved the least common factor viz the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan on which all were in agreement. Moscow wanted to cut its losses and get on with perestroika, Washington was keen to see the communist tide rolled back; Islamabad had to get the Russians out of their backyard. Kabul, reluctantly, had to learn to stand on its own feet. So the withdrawal of the Soviet troops went through as planned but not without having to cross a few hurdles.

But when it came to the instrument concerning non-intervention and non-interference, something in which Najib was vitally interested, none of the actors were willing to play their role as envisaged in the Geneva Accord. US Congressman Charles Wilson, who had always championed the Afghan cause, put it very aptly when talking about the clause of non-intervention, "This was a planned, calculated ambiguity. We fully expected the Soviet Union to accuse Pakistan of violating the agreement and we fully expected Pakistan to deny it". It started with the Kremlin insisting on meeting their obligations to Afghanistan based on the 1978 Treaty of Peace and Friendship with them, which in practical terms meant continuing to supply weapons to the Kabul regime. While superpowers do what they feel is in their interest they usually seek a legal cover for doing so. In this case Najib had to be strengthened to ensure that he remains in power after the Soviet troops had left and the legal cover was the 1978 Treaty.

Superpowers attitude on positive symmetry

The United States followed by saying very correctly, that if the Russians continue giving military assistance to Kabul they would also provide arms and ammunition to the *Mujahideen*. No less a person than President Reagan said "there is nothing in the agreement that is going to prevent us from supplying the

Mujahideen, as long as they need it and so long as the Soviet Union continues to supply the Afghan forces and support their puppet government which they are leaving behind". The fact that the Americans reduced the supply of weapons to the freedom fighters immediately after the withdrawal, inspite of their statements to the contrary is unexplainable.

With both superpowers accepting a positive symmetry it was impossible for Pakistan not to violate para 9 of Article II which clearly stated that each high contracting party 'would refrain from making any agreement or arrangements with other states designed to intervene or interfere in the internal or external affairs of the other high contracting party'. Unfortunately the superpowers were not violating the agreement as they had accepted the positive symmetry. Pakistan was doing so but there was no other option.

Pakistan, kept on denying that it was not acting as a conduit for weapons to Afghanistan. Pakistan also had made certain that para 12 which prohibited Pakistan from harbouring camps and bases or otherwise organising training, financing equipping and arming of individuals pertained to what para 11 called terrorist groups, saboteurs or subversive agents. The *Mujahideen* did not come under this category. They were freedom fighters who had a right under the UN Charter to struggle for their independence. Instead of denying a reality Pakistan should have highlighted this aspect to support its Afghan policy.

Najib retained 300 Soviet military advisers. He violated Pakistan's borders by firing Skud missiles deep into Pakistan territory on more than one occasion. The Resistance in any case had rejected the Accord and vowed to continue the struggle.

The Geneva Accord, therefore, achieved only the withdrawal of foreign forces from Afghanistan. It was not able to fully solve the external dimension of the Afghan conflict. The internal dimension had not been touched at all. Voices were raised that Pakistan should not have signed the Accord in its present form. Some say that Pakistan was pressurised by Washington to do so. Mr. Mohammad Khan Junejo, when asked to comment on this allegation denied that the US was putting any pressure on him during the final stages of the Geneva negotiations[96]. Zain Noorani, who put his signature on the document on behalf of the

government of Pakistan also replied in the same vein when questioned by the author[97].

What would have happened if Pakistan had not signed the Accord? The Soviets would have withdrawn their troops anyway as they were determined to do so for a number of reasons (explained in detail in Chapter VII - withdrawal). They would, however, have gone back according to their own worked out schedule which may have taken longer than the 10 months specified in the agreement[98] or shorter if they so wished. Vadim P. Perfilyev, Soviet Foreign Ministry spokesman, speaking on this aspect said "if an agreement is not signed ..... the time table and other aspects of the withdrawal will be determined by the Soviet Union and Afghanistan, independent of the terms informally agreed upon in Geneva"[99]. The withdrawal certainly would not have been front-loaded ie the major portion of the troops being withdrawn closer to the dead line giving the Kabul army support to the very end. The withdrawal may not have been total. Some troops may have been left behind.

The other negative factor would have been the further deterioration of relations between Pakistan and USSR which would not have been in Pakistan's interest. As a result of the Geneva Accord the United Nations could establish UNGOMAP offices in Islamabad and Kabul. Though they functioned for nearly two years and did not achieve much, they were of some help in obtaining information about conditions in Afghanistan which would be useful when peace finally returns to the war-ravaged country.

The Geneva Accord also helped in creating an urge for continuing the process of finding a political solution to the Afghan problem. An Afghan Interim Government came into place, the fact that it disintegrated after a year is due more to the uncompromising attitude of the Afghan leaders than to the ineffectiveness of the Geneva Accord.

Although the agreement was violated by all those who signed it, it was a peg on which future action towards finding a political solution could be hung. Another positive element was the unwritten understanding that the United Nations would actively work towards the formation of a broad-based government in Afghanistan acceptable to the majority of the people. The appointment of Benon Sevan as the United Nations Secretary

General's personal representative on Afghanistan and his frequent meetings with the Afghan leaders would not have been possible without the Accord.

The office of the Chief Coordinator for the return of refugees came into existence as a result of the Accord. It collected a great deal of data which would be needed in assembling, transporting and finally settling the Afghan refugees in their homeland in safety. A ray of hope for the return of the Afghan refugees therefore became visible after the Geneva Agreement.

The superpowers also continued to include Afghanistan in their talks and tried to come to a political solution whereby peace could be returned to the war-torn country. Bilateral relations between USSR and Pakistan and those between Soviet Union and other countries began to improve.

It was, of course obvious that the fighting would not cease after the Soviet withdrawal. President Zia knew that fully well. He even expected continued bloodshed between the PDPA and the *Mujahideen* as the second objective of removing Najib and his political colleagues was yet to be achieved.

Notes

1. Thelweg principle states that when the boundary of adjoining states is formed by a water channel the middle of that channel will be taken as the border between the two.
2. Security Council Resolution 462 (1980), 9 January, 1980.
3. Pakistan Times, 8 January, 1980.
4. Keesings Contemporary Archives, Volume XXVI , 30364, 18 July, 1980.
5. UN document A/36/457/S/14649.
6. UN Resolution E S 6/2, 14 January, 1980 Keesings Archives, volume XXII, 30869 15 May, 1981. See Appendix III for full text of the resolution.
7. Pakistan Times, 17 May, 1980.
8. Keesings Archives, Volume XXVII, 311142, 23 October, 1981.
9. Pravda, 5 August, 1981.
10. Kabul New Times, 12 July, 1981.
11. Ibid.
12. For full text of the UNGA Resolution 36/37 of 20 November, 1980 see Appendix VI.
13. For full text of the First Extraordinary Session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers meeting at Islamabad on 27-29 January, 1980 see Appendix IV.
14. Shahi, A. Pakistan's Security and Foreign Policy, Progressive Publishers, Lahore, 1988, p. 119.
15. Pakistan Times, 23 May, 1980.
16. Agha Shahi, p. 121; Interview, 1 August, 1991.
17. Pakistan Times, 29 January, 1981.
18. Ibid.
19. Pakistan Times, 6 February, 1981.
20. Pakistan Times, 29 January, 1981.
21. Keesings Archives, Volume XXVII, 30879, 22 May, 1981.
22. Keesings Archives, Volume XXVII, 30879, 22 May, 1981
23. Keesings Archives, Volume XXVI, 30383, 1 August, 1980.
24. Keesings Archives, Volume XXVIII, 31545, 18 June, 1982.
25. Pakistan Times, 26 May, 1980.
26. Pakistan Times, 15 November, 1981.
27. Keesings Archives, 3154, 18 June, 1982.
28. Pakistan Times, 14 February, 1981.

29. Narrated to the author on 7 May, 1990 by scholars at the Institute of Oriental Studies, Moscow who saw the TV coverage.
30. Amstutz, J.B. The First Five Years of Soviet *occupation*, National Defence University, Washington DC, 1986, p. 298.
31. Nation, 7 July, 1989; US Military assistance to Afghan *Mujahideen* rose from \$30 million in 1980 to \$600 million in 1987. Total cost of the war in Afghanistan to the US has been estimated at \$5 billion in 10 years.
32. Pakistan Times, 4 January, 1981.
33. Pakistan Times, 6, January, 1981.
34. Pakistan Times, 13 January, 1981.
35. Report of the UN Secretary General on the situation in Afghanistan, Agenda Item 26, A/36/654, S/14745, 6 November, 1981.
36. UN document A/37/482, 27 September, 1982.
37. Pakistan Times, 26 June, 1982.
38. Ibid.
39. UN document A/37/482, S/15429, 27 September 1982.
40. Keesings Archives, Volume XXIX, 32249, July, 1983.
41. Pakistan Times, 27 April, 1983.
42. Monthly Globe, Karachi, May-June, 1989, p. 23.
43. Report of the UN Secretary General on the situation in Afghanistan, 4/41/619 S 1837, 18 September 1986, p. 3; Gorbachev also supported the setting up of a government with the participation in it of political forces which find themselves outside the country's borders.
44. Ibid, A/42/600, S/19160, 29 September, 1987, p. 3.
45. Ibid.
46. Narrated by Abdus Sattar, Ambassador of Pakistan in Moscow on 7 May, 1990, former Foreign Secretary of Pakistan.
47. Agha Shahi, p. 132.
48. Interview, Ambassador Abdus Sattar on 8 May 1990 at Moscow.
49. Ibid.
50. Saudia Gazette, 8 April, 1988.
51. Pakistan Times, 4 April, 1988.
52. Ibid, 6 April, 1988.
53. Ibid, 15 April, 1988.
54. Agha Shahi, p. 136.
55. Asia Week, 11 March, 1988, p. 22.
56. Interview, Mohammad Khan Junejo, former Prime Minister of Pakistan on 20 March, 1990.

57. Ibid; Pakistan Times 10, 11 March, 1988.

58. Interview, Mohammad Khan Junejo.

59. Personal observation; confirmed at an interview with Agha Shahi, former Foreign Minister of Pakistan.

60. Written reply given to the author by Air Chief Marshal Zulfiqar, Ambassador of Pakistan in Washington.

61. Interview, Zain Noorani - former Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Government of Pakistan, 21 February, 1990.

62. Ibid.

63. Interview Mohammad Khan Junejo.

64. Agha Shahi, p. 142.

65. Text of Geneva Accord at Appendix VII.

66. UN document A/43/720, S/20230, 14 October, 1988, p. 4.

67. Khaleej Times, 15 April, 1988.

68. Khaleej Times, 21 April, 1988.

69. Guardian Weekly, 24 April, 1988.

70. Pakistan Times, 21 April, 1988.

71. Pakistan Times, 4 April, 1988.

72. Guardian Weekly, 6 April, 1988.

73. For details of the National Fatherland Front see Strategic Studies, Vol. XII, No. 1, Autumn 88, p. 81.

74. Gupta, B.S. Afghan Politics, Economics and Society, Francis Printer (Publishers), London, 1986, p.

75. Ibid, p. 129.

76. Strategic Studies, Vol. VII, No. 1, Autumn 88, pp. 92, 93.

77. Pakistan Times, 2 January, 1989.

78. Ibid.

79. Pakistan Times, 17 January, 1989.

80. Pakistan Times, 10 January, 1989.

81. Pakistan Times, 8 January, 1989.

82. Meeting with the author on 1 October, 1989. (Name of the diplomat withheld).

83. Newsweek, 8 January, 1990, p. 10.

84. Far Eastern Economic Review, 7 December, 1989, p. 31.

85. Newsweek 13 March, 1989.

86. Jordan Times, 16 January, 1989.

87. Jordan Times, 19-20 January, 1989.

88. Tehran Times, 11 February, 1988.

89. Pakistan Times, 28 January, 1989.

90. Ibid.

91. Pakistan Times, 2 February, 1989.

92. Pakistan Times, 3 February, 1989.

93. Interview with author on 10 February, 1990 at Islamabad.

94. Pakistan Times, 11 February, 1989.

95. Informal meeting with Sahabzada Yaqub Khan, Foreign Minister of Pakistan.

96. Interview with author, 20 March, 1990 at Islamabad.

97. Interview with the author on 21 February, 1990.

98. Meeting with Georgi Arabatov in Moscow in March, 1988.

99. Similar remarks were made to the author by Yevgeny Primakov when he met him in Moscow just prior to the Russian troops withdrawal.

PART-III
WITHDRAWL AND AFTER

7 Withdrawal

"It is undialectical, unscientific and theoretically wrong to regard the course of world history as smooth and always in a forward direction without occasional gigantic leaps backwards".

V.I. Lenin

The 'miracle of the century' occurred on 15 May, 1988 when the Soviet troops began to pull back their 'limited military contingent' from Afghanistan. Contrary to what has been generally believed it was not the first time, after World War II, that Russia had withdrawn its forces from a neighbouring country where they had been sent in support of its political objectives. Azerbeijan (1945-1946); Porkkala base in Finland (1955-1956) and Austria (1956) were the three other places from where the Soviets had retreated. The new leadership in the Kremlin had begun calling the military adventure in Afghanistan a 'mistake'. It had, after nine long years, in the words of Mikhail Gorbachev, become a 'bleeding wound' hence it became necessary for him to prevent any further loss of blood

Within a few months of taking over as General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Gorbachev, in his address to the foreign ambassadors in Moscow, expressed his desire to search for a just solution to the Afghan problem. At a meeting between President Ronald Reagan and General Secretary Gorbachev in November, 1985 Gorbachev informed Reagan that the Soviet Union was working on a political solution to the Afghan problem and that the Soviet troops would not stay in that country indefinitely[1]. It was, however, on 25 February, 1986, while addressing the 27th CPSU Party Congress that Gorbachev first

hinted at the possibility of the withdrawal of Soviet forces from that country, He did however also mention that Moscow could not run away abandoning it to the mercy of other Powers[2]. In May, 1986 as a further step towards his objective he replaced Babrak Karmal to placate the resistance against the Kabul regime.

Ten months later speaking to some Western journalists at a Moscow farm Gorbachev emphasised the need for a lasting peace to improve the economy of the USSR. It was in July, 1987 that he specified a definite time table, for the de-induction of the Soviet military contingent, to Najibullah. In September the same year Edward Shevardnadze stated that Soviet troops would be out of Afghanistan before President Reagan leaves his office. The Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister, Yuli Voronstov informed the US under Secretary of State Micheal Armacost, in Geneva that the USSR would no longer hold the withdrawal of forces to the guaranteed survival of the PDPA.

On 8 February, 1988 the withdrawal plan was made public. Gorbachev specified 15 May as the date for the commencement of the withdrawal which was to be completed within a year. The plan of withdrawal was given final shape at Tashkent between the heads of States of USSR and Afghanistan on 7 April. A week later the Geneva Accord was signed. Instrument 4 which related to the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan was endorsed by the governments of USSR and Afghanistan.

The withdrawal was to commence on 15 May and be completed by 15 February, 1989. It was also specified that the withdrawal would be front loaded viz half of the Soviet military contingent would leave within three months. This was to avoid the Soviets retaining the bulk of their forces till the very end thus enabling them to stock-pile arms and ammunition and consolidate Najibullah's regime. It was also to ensure that there was a 'certain inevitability to the withdrawal plan[3]".

Unlike Nikita Krushchev, whose ouster came after the Cuban debacle Gorbachev's decision to retreat from his southern neighbourhood did not result in his overthrow nor were there any voices heard against the withdrawal. The reason being that the Soviet military involvement in Afghanistan was becoming more and more unpopular in the USSR and the average Soviet citizen wanted their soldiers to return home.

Causes of Withdrawal

The credit for the withdrawal of the Soviet troops from Afghanistan must go first and foremost to the courage, bravery and determination of the Afghan *Mujahideen* who, against all odds, forced a superpower, to vacate their homeland. The pull out, however would have been considerably delayed without the realism. sagacity and wisdom shown by Gorbachev, the young and dynamic Secretary General of the Communist Party. He had the moral courage to openly confess, the moment he came to power, that the intervention in Afghanistan was wrong and should be ended. The untiring efforts of the personal representative of the United Nations Secretary General, Mr. Diego Cordovez, who managed to close the seemingly unbridgeable gap between the interlocutors also made a positive contribution to the decision by the Kremlin leadership to call back their forces from Afghanistan.

If at all a feather is to be placed in somebody's cap for this historic event it should be in the cap of General Zia-ul-Haq for he was the architect of Pakistan's Afghan policy. He single-heartedly pursued his aim of keeping the Russians out from his backyard. Inspite of external and internal pressures he continued to advocate the *Mujahideen* cause in every international gathering, loudly, clearly, forcibly and with full conviction. Bomb blasts in almost all the cities of Pakistan which claimed hundreds of innocent lives and rocket attacks into Pakistan territory from across the Durand Line did not deter him from his twin objectives of getting the Soviets out of Afghanistan and eventually establishing an Islamic government in Kabul. His ISI Chief, General Akhtar Abdur Rahman, later succeeded by Lieutenant General Hamid Gul, greatly assisted him in trying to achieve his goals. His life was, tragically, cut short and he could not taste the fruits of 'victory' from the tree which he had nurtured with such great care.

It will not be correct, however to assume that military pressure was the main factor in the Soviet pull out from Afghanistan. The Russians had not been defeated. Their troops were not in disarray. They did lose over 13,000 lives in the nine years of conflict, Compared to the 58,000 US servicemen who died in the killing fields of Vietnam[4], the Soviet casualties were not too heavy. Unlike democratic countries where the government is responsive to public opinion the Soviet Union was till very late, a closed

society. The CPSU was not burdened with such restraints and pursued its policies irrespective of what the common man in the street felt about them. The controlled electronic media and press did not mention the casualties occurring astride the Hindu Kush. To the ordinary Russian the Soviet army was performing its international duty in Afghanistan. Gorbachev's policy of 'glasnost' did bring the fighting in Afghanistan to the drawing rooms of the average Russian citizen and criticism against the policy of the previous rulers began to appear in the columns of the newspapers. But the Kremlin leadership could have kept their troops inside Afghanistan longer if other considerations for their pulling out were not present.

The Soviet economy was on the decline. Russia was falling far behind the Western world in the quality of life of its people. Consumer goods were in short supply. Resources were being diverted to support ideological goals in other countries. The needs of the Soviet citizens were being neglected. It was time to reign in and to cut expenditure on supporting client states. A person of lesser qualities than Gorbachev would have hesitated to sacrifice ideological concepts for economic gains. Withdrawal of troops not only from Afghanistan but also from Eastern Europe and Mongolia would help in providing resources to fuel economic reforms. The $130 billion defence expenditure had to be reduced.

Moscow was also keen to end the Cold War and to have better ties with Washington so as to cut down on its defence establishment. It wanted to terminate the rivalry with the West. With the Soviet economy stagnating Gorbachev needed considerable resources to give substance to his policy of 'perestroika'. He had to cut down on weapons to find money for ploughs. This would only be possible with the cooperation of the United States. To create the right climate for meaningful negotiations on the reduction of nuclear and conventional weapons, Afghanistan had to be vacated. Gorbachev wanted to open windows to the United States. He was working towards a global detente and towards dismantling of blocs and alliances[5]'. His troops in Afghanistan were proving to be an impediment to his objectives.

The other reason why Gorbachev called his soldiers home was his desire to improve relations with the Peoples Republic of China. The PRC had included the withdrawal of Soviet soldiers

from Afghanistan as one of the conditions for rapprochement with its communist neighbour, the other being the return of the Vietnamese troops from Kampuchea. It is only after his troops left Afghanistan that Gorbachev visited Beijing - the first Soviet head of state to visit the Chinese capital after a gap of 30 years. Li Peng, the Chinese premier, went to Moscow a year after the withdrawal of Russian forces from Afghanistan. None of these would have been possible if Soviet troops were still in that country.

Another constraints which the Soviets were feeling because of their presence in Afghanistan was their contact with the conservative Muslim States. In order to gain markets for their goods they very much wanted to reduce the feeling of animosity that had developed against them. The Kremlin leadership had also come to realise, though rather late, that Afghanistan was not ready for communism. In the words of Mr. Primakov, "Afghanistan is a backward country. Its people are extremely poor and illiterate. They are strongly bound to their primitive ways. It is not a place where communism will be easily accepted[6]".

The ever increasing number of nations who voted in favour of the resolutions on Afghanistan in the UN General Assembly sessions also must have had a profound effect on the Russian leadership. The Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister, Vladimir Petrovsky, speaking in the UN Assembly's Political Committee, while referring to Afghanistan, said "bearing in mind the fact that our action was condemned by over 100 members of the UN, we came to realise eventually that we had set ourselves against the international community, violated rules of conduct and defied man's universal interests, as a result we have withdrawn our troops from Afghanistan[7]".

Rough Weather Ahead

In May, 1988 the Soviets were in 14 provinces out of 29. They were manning 18 garrisons in all[8]. The first units to upstick and move out were those in Jalalabad. One thousand Soviet troops gathered and observed one minute's silence for the dead before mounting their vehicles which would take them home.

The withdrawal ran into difficulties soon after it began. General Mirza Aslam Beg had given an assurance to the Soviet leadership that the *Mujahideen* would not attack the retreating Soviet troops. In return Moscow was to withdraw its support to

Najib. The Soviets went back on their word said the Pakistani Chief of Army Staff[9].

The *Mujahideen* who should have allowed the Russians to leave continued to harass them all along their routes of withdrawal. It would have been better to keep their powder dry for the next battle they had to fight against Najibullah's pro-Soviet regime but trigger-happy as they are and '*badal*' being obligatory on every Afghan they continued ambushing the retreating '*Shuravi*'. How much of this was to observe a tribal code and how much was it to enrich their personal stockpiles of arms one cannot say, Whatever may be the case their frequent attacks on the withdrawing Soviet soldiers did cause a disturbance in the schedule of withdrawal. Harassment of the Soviet forces while withdrawing was tacitly being supported by the US as many members of the Congress wanted to see the Soviets being humiliated in Afghanistan, similar to what happened in Vietnam during the US troops withdrawal from that country in 1976.

When I discussed this issue with the Afghan leaders at the Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad, they agreed at the counter-productive nature of the attacks on the retreating Russians. But it appears that they were not convinced and changed their minds when they went back. Perhaps it was the hatred for the '*firangi*' which forced them to cause as much damage to the Red army as it did to the Afghans during their nine years 'occupation' of Afghanistan. What is more likely the field commanders were their own masters and an opportunity to get their revenge against an enemy was irresistible. Besides, if they could deprive the Russians of a few weapons and add that to their prized possessions they would not let that opportunity go by. It was Napoleon who summed up his field commander Murat as - 'He is brave but has no head' - a description that could fit some of the Afghan Commanders.

The final phase of the withdrawal was only three months away when news began to be received that further northward movement of the Soviet troops had been halted. This caused alarm and concern in Western capitals. Pakistan was very much perturbed. The freedom fighters were divided as to what should be the next strategy. First Deputy Foreign Minister of the USSR Alexander Bessmertnykh is reported to have said "By virtue of the political situation that has formed in Afghanistan the withdrawal

of Soviet troops has been suspended[10]'. Edward Shevardnadze told Pakistan's Ambassador in Moscow that since the civil war has intensified the Soviet Union may reconsider the time frame for withdrawal[11].

The Russians suspended the second stage of their withdrawal, which was to commence soon after 15 August - a date specified, in the agreements, for withdrawing half of the Soviet contingent. The reasons could be several. A stoppage in the return of Soviet troops could have given them a leverage to extract some concessions from USA and Pakistan on the composition of the future government in Afghanistan. It could also be presumed that a halt was necessary to establish security posts en route to enable a safe journey home for the Red army. May be they wanted more time to allow the Kabul regime to consolidate their position in the cities they controlled or be able to dump more arms, ammunition and supplies before they left Afghanistan.

Yuli Voronstov, gave his reason for the delay in sending the troops back when he said "we would not like to withdraw while we are under attack. This will give the impression that we are running away[12]". Major General Leu Serebov, political officer at the Soviet military high command at Kabul, told a US reporter 'your generals ran away from Saigon' but we are carrying out a withdrawal that is proceeding according to plan[13]. Unlike the Americans in Vietnam the Soviets wanted to leave Afghanistan with honour and in an orderly manner. Then only they could tell their people that their soldiers had returned after fulfilling their 'international duty'. The continued guerrilla activities and the uncompromising attitude of the *Mujahideen* made Voronstov remark that there was a danger that circumstances could arise under which the Soviet Union would be unable to do what they had in principally decided to do[14]".

The Soviets, while withdrawing their normal troops, were reported to have sent back, about 15,000 special forces to Kabul[15]. This news was not confirmed and if at all it was true the figure appears to be highly exaggerated. Micheal Armacost visited Moscow on 7 September, 1988 and informed Yuli Vornstov that the return of military advisers had gone beyond self defence[16]. The United States continued to accuse the Soviets of inducting more and more sophisticated weapons into Afghanistan at this stage of the withdrawal. According to Washington, Moscow had

sent advanced jet fighter planes and missiles and were using them against the *Mujahideen*,. The Americans also blamed the Soviets for using the largest conventional bomb in the Soviet arsenal against the *Mujahideen* during the dying moments of their military presence south of the Oxus[17]. The bomb was said to be as heavy as 12,000 pounds (equal to the fire power of 500 field guns when fired simultaneously). These super heavy bombs were dropped by MiG- 25 Back-Fire bombers on bands of guerrillas. A classic case of using a hammer to kill a fly, with the fly getting out of the way every time.

After suspending the withdrawal Gorbachev suggested to the United States to suspend weapon's shipment to the partisans and offered in return to cut off supplies to the Marxist government in Kabul[18]. This proposal of the General Secretary of the CPSU was immediately rejected by George Shultz and the reason he gave was a kind of a tit for tat. "We proposed to the Soviet Union quite some time ago a mutual cessation of supplies and they rejected that[19]" was the reply given by the Secretary of State of the United States administration.

The Soviets did not earlier agree to a negative symmetry proposed by USA before signing the Accord because they wanted to provide the Kabul regime with some more sophisticated weapons to be able to beat off attacks by the 'insurgents'. They knew that America would not be able to match their supplies to Kabul. In November, 1988. The Soviets were leaving, they were still not sure whether Najibullah could hold out on his own. So after having sufficiently boosted up the arsenals of the Kabul army and satisfying themselves that Najib was now well armed, they wanted to use the negative symmetry to prevent the *Mujahideen* from becoming too strong. The United States for this very reason rejected the proposal which they themselves had initiated just before signing the Geneva Accord.

Gorbachev also spoke about 'a cease fire' in Afghanistan repeating Najibullah's offer of a unilateral cease fire made on 1 January, 1987. Pakistan's Ambassador at the United Nations, 73-year, old S. Shahnawaz Khan, a seasoned diplomat, called the proposal "unexceptionable but unrealistic. "A cease fire in the presence of invading forces is meaningless in Afghanistan[20]" said the Pakistani envoy. The *Mujahideen* declared that they would not stop fighting as long as Soviet forces remained in Afghanistan.

Professor Burhanuddin Rabbani, leader of the Jamiat-e-Islami, Afghanistan, is reported to have said: "There is no meaning in a cease fire and in stopping the fighting as long as the Russian Army remains in Afghanistan[21]". They continued to fight even when the Soviet troops left!

Political Parleys

Hectic political parleys, between the various actors in the gory drama of Afghanistan, were noticed in the two months just before the final phase of the withdrawal. The United Nations General Secretary voiced his deep concern at the escalation in the fighting. "Time had come to give a peace a chance". said Perez d' Cuellar with reference to the Geneva Accord. He also called on all the Afghans to rise to this historic occasion and to resolve differences peacefully through an intra-Afghan dialogue[22].

The Soviets showed their willingness at this late stage to talk to the *Mujahideen*. Yuli Voronstov met the *Mujahideen* leaders at Taif in Saudi Arabia and Islamabad. He also went to Tehran. In addition to an agreement on the release of Soviet prisoners of war he also tried to convince them to accept a cease fire call by Najib and work out an arrangement to share power with the PDPA.

Valadimir Petrovsky also urged the *Mujahideen* leaders, who were trying to form a consultative council, not to let this decisive moment for the settlement of the Afghan issue slip by[23]. Of-course he was referring to a compromise with the Kabul regime before the Soviets leave.

Then came Edward Shevardnadze himself. He flew into Islamabad from Beijing, where he had convinced the Chinese leaders of the sincerity of the Russians in withdrawing its troops from Afghanistan - thus fulfilling one of the conditions laid down by China for re-establishing normal relations with the USSR. While in the Pakistani capital he was prepared to meet the *Mujahideen* leaders but they showed no willingness to do so. 'The mountain had come to Mohammad' but his followers had become a proud people. Thy had even forgotten that the Prophet (PBUH) had even signed a treaty with his enemies ending a conflict which if continued would have caused unnecessary bloodshed. The Soviet Foreign Minister, however, hoped that all sides including the present Kabul regime would be given equitable representation in the proposed shura. His proposals, outlined at a press

conference, in Islamabad, at the time of his departure, were: (1) a cease fire in Afghanistan should be accepted with the *Mujahideen* remaining in control of the areas they occupied; (2) a dialogue between all the Afghan warring factions; (3) a holding of a shura which should include the *Mujahideen* and elements of the PDPA; (4) former King Zahir Shah could be asked to play a role in an interim administration and (5) an international conference could be held to find ways of settling the Afghan problem[24] (This was first suggested by Mikhail Gorbachev at the 43rd Session of the United Nations General Assembly, in November, 1988).

Perez de Cuellar was hoping to make 1989 a 'year of peace' for Afghanistan. He did welcome the positive steps taken towards the promotion of peaceful settlement but was not satisfied with the 'slow pace' in this direction. He offered to provide assistance to the Afghan people in their sincere efforts to find a political solution to their problem. He was referring to the need for an intra-Afghan dialogue for the establishment of a broad based government[25]. In November, 1988, the United Nations also passed, by consensus, a resolution jointly sponsored by Pakistan and the Soviet Union requiring the Afghan people to work towards an intra-Afghan dialogue for the establishment of a broad-based government and make efforts to accelerate the peace. Benon Sevan, also reiterated such a proposal when he met the Peshawar-based Afghan leaders.

Pakistan played an active role in the political negotiation by trying to persuade the *Mujahideen* to stop attacking The Soviet forces during their withdrawal. This was being done on the understanding that the Soviets will dump Najib after the withdrawal. It encouraged them to form a shura which would include the various groups, fighters, and emigres both in Pakistan and outside. It offered Rawalpindi as the venue to resolve the differences between the Peshawar-based and Tehran-based *Mujahideen*. Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, while addressing a press conference in Jeddah on 15 January, 1989, called for a political solution to the Afghan problem and emphasised the need for a quick political structure before the withdrawal of Soviet troops[26]. The ISI was given the task to persuade the Afghan leaders to form such a structure which could replace the Kabul regime after the departure of the Soviets and the removal of Najibullah.

Situation in Kabul

As the time for the last Soviet soldier to leave Kabul drew

nearer there was considerable anxiety in the capital. No one was certain as to what lay ahead. Rumours and predictions were afloat. Richard Evans, a prominent journalist, predicted the downfall of Najib within days[27]. He believed that the *Mujahideen* were holding off their attack and would come down from the hills, like the wolves on the fold, once the Russians were gone, Kabul would then become a free for all environment[28]. Even the United States, whose ability to obtain inside information through the CIA is quite effective, came up with the view that the Kabul regime would not survive for any significant time after the Soviet withdrawal[29].

Many observes of the Afghan scene felt that Kabul faced a gloomy future. Several diplomats feared that there would be a state of anarchy after the protective umbrella was lifted. They expected food shortages if the conflict continued. Some did not rule out the possibility of a division of the country with Najib establishing himself with Soviet support in Mazar-e-Sharif and the *Mujahideen* forming their government in Kabul. Such uncertainty in the minds of the diplomats in Afghanistan was a result of the exaggerated stories of the determination and ferocity of the ideologically motivated *Mujahideen* and the bloody battle which could ensue for the control of Kabul after the departure of the Soviet troops.

All this created a kind of panic amongst the foreigners in Kabul. Many embassies started closing down, families were returned home. The staff reduced to the barest minimum. The West German embassy shut down on 18 January - as they considered the oncoming situation in Kabul as extremely hazardous. The British embassy issued a warning to all British nationals to leave Afghanistan. Austria and Japan locked up their missions. The Indian Embassy sent the wives and children back to New Delhi. Iran and Pakistan were the only two non-communist countries which kept their cool. The 20 to 25 Pakistanis in the embassy stayed on their posts. Even the United Nation agencies began thinning out. Many Afghans began to leave Kabul for safer places. The Indian embassy was issuing 200 visas a day. The United States embassy was receiving 250 applications for visas daily[30].

Panic leads to rumours and rumours lead to exaggeration. Western observers, known for checking and rechecking

information being received, fell prey to all kinds of stories being circulated in the final phase of the withdrawal. According to some of them 10,000 PDPA members and their families had fled the country for Pakistan, India or the Soviet Union. The Kabulis were glad that the Soviets were going. Like all patriotic citizens they hated foreign occupation and did not relish the sight of the Russians on the streets of Kabul. Except for the die hard communists, most of the Afghans were not appreciative of Najibullah's regime. Many hated him for his oppressive actions against political dissidents when he was the chief of the State Security Organisation (KHAD). Later called WAD.

The Resistance had been able to win over a large number of civilian and military personnel, who were willing to cooperate with the *Mujahideen*, when the final assault on Kabul came. But the silent majority were tired of war. They had all lost some dear or near ones in the decade long fighting. They had been subjected to constant harassment by the government security agencies. Rockets from *Mujahideen* hideouts in the nearby hills had been raining on them for the past nine years. Their houses were riddled with bullet holes. Business had dwindled. Long queues for a '*nan*' (flattened bread) had become a routine. The Kabulis wanted peace above all else. It did not matter to them any longer whether it was Najib, Zahir Shah or Hikmatyar who stayed at the Darul Aman Palace. This did not mean that they were prepared to accept the rule of the PDPA. Far from it, they still remained devoted to their religious beliefs and their traditional Afghan customs. But they hoped and prayed for the fighting to cease.

In the meantime the Soviets were ensuring that Najibullah had the wherewithal to meet the onslaught from the *Mujahideen* when the chips were down and that enough food and other supplies were available in Kabul and other cities to ward off the danger of capitulation because of being besieged. Fifteen Soviet Antonov-76 transport planes were landing daily at Kabul airport since 20 January, 1989, each carrying 25 tonnes of flour. The total amount of flour was expected to reach 3,500 tonnes by the end of the month[31]. Even the leaders of the Afghan *Mujahideen* were making plans to send food to the civilians in Kabul and Jalalabad.

Soviet Attempts to Ensure Peace

On the eve of the withdrawal of Soviet forces the much awaited general elections were held in Pakistan and consequently a change

of government took place in the country. Ms. Benazir Bhutto the Co-Chairperson of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) became the Prime Minister. Her revulsion of everything that General Zia had done or stood for was well known. She and her party had been suppressed throughout the period of the military rule. Many of her party members had been jailed, exiled, lashed and deprived of their jobs by Zia's government. Her brother Murtaza Bhutto had received assistance from the PDPA regime in Kabul to take their revenge against General Zia. It was expected that she would alter Pakistan's Afghan policy and not be too strong in supporting the *Mujahideen* cause and that she would certainly discontinue advocating the military option.

The Soviets tried to get some advantage from this changeover and speeded up their peace keeping efforts by sending Voronstov and Edward Shevardnadze to Islamabad. But the concession they wanted from Pakistan viz recognition of the principle of power-sharing with the PDPA, was not forthcoming - not even from Benazir who had violently opposed General Zia's Afghan policies. The Soviets were perhaps banking on the alleged earlier statement of Benazir's mother Mrs. Nusrat Bhutto, the Chairperson of the PPP. She is reported to have said, when out of the government, that her party would recognise the Kabul regime if they came to power[32]. However, the view of the landscape changes when one moves from the passenger seat to the driver's seat. The co-chairperson of the PPP could not envisage such a step. Both Shevardnadze and the Afghan Foreign Minister Abdul Wakil, however, felt that Pakistan could play an important role in an Afghan settlement and assist in the search for a constructive intra-Afghan dialogue[33]. Thereby implying that Pakistan should encourage the *Mujahideen* to talk to the Kabul regime directly.

The Soviets were frantically trying to prevent a continuation of the conflict in Afghanistan as they were still not certain whether Najib would be able to stave off the *Mujahideen* assaults specially as his army was confined to the cities each far apart from the other. They were, therefore, also seeking a political solution in which PDPA still had some role. Former King Zahir Shah was, therefore, also approached. Yuli Voronstov, went to Rome and met the ex-King of Afghanistan. It was the first direct contact between Zahir Shah and the Soviet government.

The former monarch is however, reported to have rejected

Gorbachev's proposal for a cease fire in Afghanistan[34]. He suggested the convening of a council in Afghanistan of about 50 to 60 politicians or prominent individuals to create a new government[35]. He did not wish to return till Najib was in power as none of the Afghan refugees were willing to join hands with the communists. He felt that the United Nations could again play an important role. Zahir Shah favoured the convening of a *Loya Jirga* to decide the structure of the future set up in Afghanistan. However the four conservative parties in Peshawar and the eight parties based in Iran rejected any role for Zahir Shah. "He belongs to history and has no role in Afghanistan and its political future" said Professor Rabbani[36].

Mujahideen's Attitude

While all others were travelling frequently from one capital to another trying to find a political settlement before Soviet troops evacuated Kabul, the *Mujahideen* were preparing to fight on. Their objectives remained the withdrawal of foreign forces and the elimination of the PDPA. The first was about to be achieved and to attain the second aim the 'war' had to continue. There were no qualms about violating the Geneva Accord as they were not a party to it and had rejected it outright. Even Ahmad Shah Masud, who had once agreed to a cease fire in the Panjsher valley for a period of six months did not respond to the overtures of Najibullah offering 'land for peace'. Like other Afghan rebels he was prepared to fight on.

The *Mujahideen* were smelling victory and they were determined to press on. When analysis is mixed with preconceived ideas or when there is an emotional approach to an issue, more often than not, the answer arrived at does not prove to be correct. I recall a talk I gave at the National Institute of Public Administration at Peshawar in the summer of 1987. I mentioned the differences which existed amongst the *Mujahideen* leaders and between them and the field commanders I ended by saying that unless the Afghan insurgents show a sense of unity, it would be difficult for them to overthrow the Kabul regime. The Director of the Institute, a highly respected and deeply religious gentleman, apologised for contradicting the guest speaker but predicted that once the Soviets left, the *Mujahideen* would run over Kabul in a matter of days. He of course let his emotions get the better of his judgement.

Lieutenant General Mirza Aslam Beg, then commanding a corps in Peshawar gave an excellent two-hours briefing on the Afghanistan situation to some research fellows of the Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad in October, 1987. His professional approach and his lucid expression left us in no doubt that the Afghan *Mujahideen* were a divided lot. Yet, according to him, they had the ability to produce the desired result if their political and military leadership joined hands to work out a common strategy. As the senior most officer responsible for the security of Pakistan's western frontiers, his views on the situation just across the border carried considerable weight. His assessment of the *Mujahideen* warranted serious considerations. Unfortunately those who were then directly, but emotionally, involved with the Afghan problem saw things through tinted glasses. They kept on believing that when the time comes the strongest of the Peshawar -7 would achieve a military victory and Pakistan would then have a friendly western border.

While everyone was predicting the fall of Najib the Soviets had made certain that their client did not capitulate. They were confident of his staying in power. Voronstov, the dynamic trouble shooter of the Soviet foreign ministry, gave no credence to the claim of the *Mujahideen* that they would topple the PDPA regime. He did not take the statements of western leaders seriously when they predicted a military victory for the *Mujahideen*. According to him the Kabul regime would survive in its own right. He of-course did not hesitate to say that Moscow would support the regime in Kabul as the legal government of the Republic of Afghanistan[37]. A senior officer of the Russian army gave Najib a 50:50 chance to survive.

Shevardnadze visited Kabul on 13 January and assured Najibullah that Moscow would continue to back his government. Efforts to find a political solution would not be at the cost of the PDPA regime. He confirmed his country's full support for Najib's policies and informed him that the Soviets would continue to provide all round assistance under treaties and agreements concluded by the two countries[38].

The *Mujahideen* leaders in Peshawar and their supporters were confident of their victory. But even General Zia, a great supporter of the *Mujahideen*, towards the end, feared a free for all after the withdrawal[39]. John Glossman, the US Charge d' Affaires

in Kabul assessed the life of the government to be short. Even field commanders predicted an early fall of the communist government. Abdul Haq, besieging Kabul, claimed that the communists would collapse within weeks of the Soviet troops withdrawal. According to him the soldiers would not like to die for the regime but as events turned out they did. Apparently the well known field commander was banking on the pro-*Mujahideen* elements within the Afghan army in Kabul. He had probably cultivated a number of them and was hoping that they would stage an uprising from within. But that did not come to pass. This optimistic view was not shared by other Afghan leaders. Naim Majrooh, the son of the well known Afghan martyr Syed Bahauddin Majrooh was apprehensive of the future. "There is complete uncertainty for us now, We do not know who is going to take power, there is no agreement[10] said Majrooh. He was right. "The Afghan leaders in Peshawar did not agree on whether they should meet Vorontsov or not let alone agreeing on who should govern the country", opined a western journalist.

Military Situation During The Withdrawal

The insurgents attacked supply and ammunition convoys on the outskirts of Kabul on 14 January[11], while Shevardnadze was in the capital. Some Afghans predicted that there would be fighting for another 10 years or even longer. They seemed to have assessed the situation more accurately than political analysts and chair-bound diplomats.

Fighting intensified along the Salang highway and in Kunduz, Ningarhar and Qandahar. The aim being two fold. Firstly to prevent stock - piling of arms and ammunition which would assist Najib to continue the fight after the Soviets had pulled back their troops and secondly to liberate a city or two if possible, which would raise their morale and lower that of the communists. It would also raise their image in the outside world. With that achieved, greater military assistance could also be expected.

The effort was concentrated around Jalalabad and Qandahar in the hope that either of the two may succumb to *Mujahideen* pressure. Being towns close to the Pakistani border the *Mujahideen* could establish their headquarters there and claim international recognition. The freedom fighters claimed a great deal of success around Jalalabad. According to them 1,000 Afghan

army soldiers and militia men were captured in January and about 400 were killed and 18 officials taken prisoner[42]. Qandahar also remained under heavy attack.

The *Mujahideen* continued to attack the Soviets in order to disrupt their attempt to build up military and food supplies. Most of the airports remained under fire which caused considerable delay in resupply efforts. The other target was the Salang highway which was the main supply route. The *Mujahideen* reported 420 incidents in 21 out of 29 Afghan provinces during January, 1989. Kabul radio accepted 72 acts of subversion in 15 provinces. Defections also increased. About 3,000 Afghan troops were reported to have joined the *Mujahideen*. This was one of the highest figures for Kabul troops defecting or surrendering in a single month[43].

It was indeed wrong strategy to attack the withdrawing Soviet forces but it would be unfair to blame the *Mujahideen* for trying to stop the Russians from supplying arms to the Kabul regime under the cover of food supplies. Professor Rabbani is reported to have said "reports of food shortage in Kabul is a conspiracy. It is a cover for large scale arms supplies to the Najib regime[44]". Ahmad Shah Masud, whose men operated along the main supply route from the Soviet border to Kabul, stated that he would allow food convoys to go through but not vehicles carrying weapons.

Foreign correspondents reported that the government forces were avoiding fighting because their morale was low. The judgement appears to be hasty as they were under orders to observe a unilateral cease-fire and only react when compelled to do so. Radio Kabul kept repeating the theme that the armed forces had been observing the cease-fire declared by the state aimed at ending the fratricidal war[45]. But along with that it also reported that the heroic armed forces carried out successful operations against the extremists[46].

The effect of the military successes of the *Mujahideen* was negated when they indulged in indiscriminate killing and looting in villages and towns after their capture. The northern provinces of Kunduz and Kunar were extensively plundered by the freedom fighters. This created a great deal of bitterness against the *Mujahideen*. To win over the civilians it was necessary for them to remain disciplined, help the civilians in their rehabilitation rather than deprive them of their belongings. It was also necessary to

give them the assurance that the area liberated would remain peaceful and administered properly. Nothing is worse than being battered about from both sides, which happens when cities change hands.

It was the statement of the Peshawar-Seven which made everybody believe that victory was at hand. As early as January when Soviet troops were still in Afghanistan the Hizb-e-Islami were hopeful that the city of Jalalabad would be liberated before the withdrawal of the Soviets from their country[47]. Those who accompanied the body of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, to Jalalabad for its burial did not see any evidence of the city falling to the *Mujahideen* in a hurry. Mr. Roedad Khan, former Secretary General of the Ministry of Interior, who also went to Jalalabad came back with the impression that Jalalabad[48] was very heavily defended and that the Afghan soldiers were well prepared and would remain loyal to their government.

As the fighting intensified around the cities and the *Mujahideen* stepped up their attacks in an attempt to gain military ascendancy over government forces before the Soviets leave, the flow of refugees to Pakistan increased. Some 50 families (about 500 persons) entered Pakistan daily through the Khyber Pass[49]. In all about 70,000 more Afghan refugees came to Pakistan in 1989.

The Final Steps

Colonel General Dmitri Girmkevich, Chief of Staff of the Soviet forces told General Beg at Moscow airport on 19 February, 1989 that all Soviet troops left Afghanistan at 0810 hours (Soviet time) on 15 February, 1989[50].

Lieutenant General Boris Gromov, from the city of Saratov on the Volga, who had earned the decoration of the Gold Star of the Hero of the Soviet Union[51] was the Commander-in-Chief of the Soviet forces in Afghanistan at the time of withdrawal. It was his third term in the war-torn country. At precisely 11.15 a.m. (local time) on 15 February, 1989 he stepped on the 'Friendship Bridge' across the Oxus river formally marking the last phase of the de-induction of the 'limited' Soviet military contingent from Afghanistan. Though being forced to retreat from Kabul he was doing so at a place and time chosen by his superiors. Unlike Ambassador Graham Martin of the US in Saigon in 1975, he did not have to cling to a helicopter and fly away from a roof top to

avoid being lynched by an angry crowd, an embarrassment which US officials had to face when Viet Cong guerrillas came crashing through the gates of the US embassy in Hanoi. Gromov, therefore, did not have to look back at a chasing enemy. He took his final steps towards his country with an air of satisfaction which prompted him to proclaim with a steady voice "we have fulfilled our international duty[52]". The pro-Marxist government which he had come to protect was still in Kabul. Its future existence was not part of his duty and so it did not matter to him personally what the future held for his southern neighbour.

Gromov went on to Kiev to take over command of the Kiev Military District. All units which went back were downgraded to class 2 and class 3 state of readiness "The manner in which the Soviets came into Afghanistan was disgraceful. The manner in which they left was impressive" was an apt statement of a Western journalist.

The curtain had fallen on Act I of the gory drama being played out on the Afghan stage. The next set of actors were the Afghan themselves. How long they would continue to shed blood before the final curtain drops is anybody's guess. For the time being the world capitals hailed this momentous event. The day that thousands of Soviet mothers had waited for had arrived. "This is an historic day for the country, which found the courage to acknowledge the real state of affairs in Afghanistan" commented Anatoly Kudravet, editor-in-chief of the Minsk Journal Neman. He was bitter at the inordinate delay in taking the decision to withdraw which resulted in having to pay a dear price[53].

At the 19th Party conference Soviet reformer, Grigory Baklanov, was critical of Soviet actions in Afghanistan as he felt that the Russian soldiers who were killed in Afghanistan died for nothing. Boris Gromov defended the decision to use Soviet forces by saying "with our help the Republic of Afghanistan has been maintained as an independent friendly state[54]". He would have been more correct, however, if he had said "with our assistance the PDPA is still holding on to the reins of government in Afghanistan".

Ghulam Ishaq Khan hailed the withdrawal. "It is a tribute to the valour of the Afghan people who waged an epic struggle and considered no sacrifice too great to rid their country of the forces of foreign occupation" said the Pakistani President. Former Prime

Minister Mohammad Khan Junejo was happy as, according to him, the withdrawal of foreign forces vindicated the principled policy persued by Pakistan towards a political settlement[56]. The UN Secretary General expressed satisfaction at the scrupulous manner in which the time frame had been observed[57]. Hamid Al Ghabid, Secretary General of the Organisation of Islamic Conference, said "the Islamic Ummah noted with profound satisfaction, the completion of the withdrawal of Soviet troops[58]".

James Baker, US Secretary of State made a cryptic remark "we understand the Soviets are out of Afghanistan and we are glad for it[59]". For Former President Jimmy Carter it was a victory for democracy[60]. Shevardnadze praised his armed forces for helping Afghanistan at a difficult moment. "The Soviet troops are leaving with a sense of their duty having been done[61]" remarked the Soviet Foreign Minister.

Unlike many others in Kabul Najib and his family had not packed their bags. They were both determined and confident that they would be able to stay in the capital even after the Soviet troops were withdrawn. Edward Shevardnadze called on Najib's house just before the withdrawal and suggested that he should send his wife and three daughters to a safer place in the Soviet Union. Fatana, Najib's wife, replied "we wont leave home for any other place[62]".

Repercussions

Afghanistan proved to be the limit of Soviet power. Having reached, it the decline of the Soviet 'empire' began. The whole edifice which Stalin and his successors had built began to crumble after the failure of the Soviets to consolidate their hold over Afghanistan.

The withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan set in motion a chain of events which brought about dramatic developments not only in East-West relations but also within the Soviet Union. Changes also occurred in the attitudes and policies of the nations which had become involved in the Afghan conflict one way or another. Impact of the Soviet retreat was also noticed in regional conflicts in other parts of the world.

First and foremost the myth of the Soviet military might had been broken. The Russian armed forces may not have been defeated on the battlefield in the conventional sense but they

certainly failed in their primary mission which was to suppress the insurgency. The fact that it has died down is due to several other factors.

Inability to impose the communist ideology in Afghanistan shattered the belief held by the erstwhile Kremlin leadership that communism is irreversible. The new crop of leaders realised the weakness and drew back in strict adherence to Marxist philosophy.

Calling back of his forces from across the Oxus helped Gorbachev to go ahead with his objective of diverting the resources to economic development. Since the withdrawal of troops was generally welcomed in the Soviet Union it made it easier for him to announce the withdrawal of Soviet forces from the WARSAW PACT countries and from Mongolia as well.

The end of the Cold War and the cooperation between Washington and Moscow on imposing sanctions on Iraq as a reprisal for annexing Kuwait would not have been possible if Soviet troops would still have been battling the *Mujahideen* in Afghanistan.

As a consequence of the de-induction of troops from foreign lands and lessening of tension with the Western World, Gorbachev could reduce the strength of the Soviet forces and cut down the defence expenditure. The problem of the rehabilitation of the returning Soviet soldiers and specially those who were wounded and disabled continued to be a source of concern in the Soviet Union. With very limited facilities available the additional requirement of goods and services for the Soviet troops returning from Afghanistan placed a further burden on available resources in Moscow and other major cities.

The dramatic upheaval in Eastern Europe may not have been a direct result of the Afghan misadventure by the Soviets but their inability to suppress a freedom movement in their neighbourhood certainly encouraged the satellite states of the Soviet Union to throw of the yoke of Russian domination. The Poles are reported to have shouted slogans "What do the Afghans have that we do not have[63]". Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia declared their independence (which was accepted by USSR) realising the lack of determination shown by the Soviets in using greater force to put down a movement against the resistance in Afghanistan. The

successful *Jehad* in Afghanistan against foreign forces encouraged the Kashmiris to stand up against the Indian atrocities in the valley. If the Afghans could throw out a superpower from their country they too could wage a struggle for the independence of their homeland.

Improvement of Sino-Soviet relations took place soon after the withdrawal of Soviet troops. An exchange of visits between the head of state of the Soviet Union and the prime minister of the Peoples Republic of China marked the end of the on going bitterness between the two nations. Gorbachev felt that the Geneva Accord had favourably influenced the search for solutions to the Kampuchean problem, and to the Iran/Iraq War. It also helped towards trying to untie the knot of the Middle East and promoting a dialogue between North and South Korea[64]. Moscow improved its relations with Iran. Yuli Voronstov and Edward Shevardnadze paid visits to Tehran. These were reciprocated by Hashemi Rafsanjani, the speaker of the Iranian Majlis who went to Moscow and found some common ground in the search for a political settlement of the Afghan problem. He felt that if Soviet forces honour their word to withdraw the Islamic Republic would have no problem with the Soviet Union.

The Soviet worries, were how to keep the PDPA in power in Afghanistan and how to prevent a militant anti-Soviet Islamic government emerging in Afghanistan. They were also concerned about the continuation of military support to the *Mujahideen* as that may enable them to seize power from the Kabul regime. By vacating Afghanistan the Soviets opened up opportunities for a more broad-based government to be formed in that country. Direct talks between the Soviets and *Mujahideen* helped to start a dialogue on the exchange of prisoners of war.

The main objective having been achieved the US Congress and to some extent the US administration began losing interest in Afghanistan. The issue was placed on the backburner as the last Soviet soldier left the country. For an unexplained reason US military aid was also temporarily suspended. The Soviet Union, on the contrary, strengthened Najibullah's hand by stock-piling one an half billion dollars worth of arms and ammunition. Moscow was not yet ready to dump Najib. They still had a vital interest in the future shape of their southern neighbour because of the proximity of their Soviet Central Asian Muslim Republics.

The *Mujahideen* stepped up their military activities in a bid to topple the Kabul regime. The United States, Pakistan and other friends of the *Mujahideen*, expecting a quick down fall of Najibullah, supported their efforts.

In Pakistan, criticism against Pakistan's continued involvement in Afghanistan's affairs grew after the withdrawal of the Soviet troops. Many felt that the objective had been achieved and that Pakistan should not get involved in trying to have a government of its choice in Afghanistan. To them priority after the withdrawal was the return of the Afghan refugees. Khan Abdul Wali Khan, Chief of the Awami National Party, sent letters to various heads of states to stop the fratricidal war which would follow the withdrawal.

The return of Soviet troops also led to differences between the Peshawar-based Afghan leaders and those in Iran on the manner in which the struggle should be continued, the nature of the future regime in Kabul and the proportion of participation in that regime by the pro-Iranian *Mujahideen* factions[65].

Prediction about Najib's immediate fall did not come true. The *Mujahideen* leaders had said that it will be in a matter of days[66]. US intelligence reports claimed that "Najibullah would not last out a year[67]". Major General Kim Tsegolov, a military adviser on Afghanistan, also felt that the Afghan army could not be relied upon to hold power after the Soviet withdrawal. The Soviet Foreign Ministry did not agree with his assessment[68]. It was Yuli Voronstov, the Russian expert on Afghanistan, who said "The Kabul regime will survive in its own right and you will know it after the Soviet withdrawal[69]. It appears that he was aware of the Afghan character more than the supporters of the *Mujahideen*. Presence of foreign forces on their soil had united the Afghan opposition. The moment they had been removed the Afghans went back to their tribal rivalries and animosities.

Soviet Prisoners

After the withdrawal of the Russian forces a demand for the release of Soviet prisoners of war in *Mujahideen*-hands grew. The Peoples Committee for the Release of Soviet Prisoners of War visited Pakistan in October, 1989. The committee supplied a list of 313 Soviet prisoners in Afghanistan. Some of them were converted to Islam and were not willing to go back to their country.

With the help of the government of Pakistan and after a great deal of persuation the *Mujahideen* agreed to release two Soviet soldiers as a gesture of good will. The *Mujahideen* were wanting to ensure that all *Mujahideen* prisoners in the hands of the Kabul regime are released in exchange for the Soviet prisoners. The AIG claimed that over 40,000 *Mujahideen* were in Kabul jails whereas Najibullah accepted only 4,200[70]. Mr Iona Andropov, leader of the Peoples Committee for the Release of Soviet Prisoners of War gave a list of 73 prisoners which, according to him, included 25 Pakistanis, 8 Arabs and 40 Afghans. The accuracy of his list could not be verified. No further progress on the release of prisoners of war was made thereafter[71], except that one more Soviet prisoner was handed over to his father by the *Mujahideen* with a great deal of fanfare in August, 1991.

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8 Civil War

"It is not for a believer to kill a believer unless it be by mistake."

Sura 4: 92-93, Al Quran.

The world heaved a sigh of relief when the Soviets finally withdrew their military contingent from Afghanistan. The oil lifeline was now in no danger to be cut. The threat from across Pakistan's border had been removed. Iran's right flank was now more secure. One of China's conditions for Sino-Soviet detente had been met. For the *Mujahideen*, however, the war was not over. Phase 1 had ended - Phase II had just begun. The second objective of toppling Najibullah's government had yet to be achieved. The third aim of forming a stable government acceptable to a broad segment of the Afghans was in its embryonic stage. With the anti-communist regime forces still determined to forcibly evict the pro-Marxist regime in Kabul the chances of peace returning to Afghanistan were minimal. The three million and more Afghan refugees on Pakistan's soil were doomed to spend more winters in their cramped tented villages.

From now on it was no longer a struggle to get the Russians out but a civil war between the Kabul regime and those opposed to it. This was quite expected as the *Mujahideen* had rejected the Geneva Accord and were not bound by agreements made between the interlocutors. Since the talks at Geneva did not include the internal issues the question of a cease fire, formation of an interim administration, the method of conducting free and fair elections were all left out. Without an agreement on these issues the power play in Afghanistan was bound to continue.

The Situation Immediately After The Withdrawal

What was the scenario immediately after the withdrawal? Unlike Ngoyen Van Thieu, who tried to defend every inch of South Vietnamese territory after the US troops had been withdrawn Najibullah decided not to contest the countryside. He concentrated on holding the major cities only and tried to keep the main highways open. The rest of Afghanistan, therefore, continued to be administered by local guerrillas commanders - many of them affiliated to one or the other political group based in Peshawar or Tehran. The *Mujahideen* claimed to be controlling 98 percent of the territory which was an exaggerated figure. It was 90 percent in 1981[1] and remained the same in 1989[2], but this did not include the provincial capitals. According to the Kabul regime 23 out of 29 provincial capitals were in its hands[3]. The truth lay in between. Independent sources testified that most of the outlying areas were no-man's land and the control of the capitals was equally shared between the two.

In terms of actual governance the Kabul regime was not so badly placed as the percentage of the total area under their control indicated. Due to the destruction of the countryside people had gravitated to the cities which had given Najib greater effectiveness over his people than what was generally believed. Najib's national reconciliation programme launched on 1 January, 1987, however, had not helped him to lure the *Mujahideen* away from their objective of removing him and eliminating his party.

Najib also continued to be plagued by the bitter rivalry between the Khalq and the Parcham. There were also policy differences in his inner circle. There were those who were in favour of negotiations with the *Mujahideen* and others who opposed it. To appease the conservative elements in Afghanistan, Najib brought about further changes in his regime's religious policies. A Ministry of Islamic Affairs was formed and a statement made that no law repugnant to Islam would be passed. An international conference on Islam was organised[4]. More visible rituals of the Islamic faith began to be practiced including his own regular attendance at the Friday congregations[5]. His efforts to win over the *Mujahideen*, however, did not succeed as none of the Afghan leaders were even prepared to meet him. Hikmatyar rejected his call to halt attacks[6] and Rabbani was reported to have said. "Najib should know well enough that the *Mujahideen* are not ready to talk to him under any condition".[7]

The *Mujahideen*, after a great deal of wrangling, had finally succeeded in forming an Afghan Interim Government (AIG). Hardly had it come on the ground when its own leaders began criticising it. Pir Syed Ahmad Gailani, head of the National Islamic Front of Afghanistan (NIFA), opposed the shura because it was not an elected one "The present interim government is not broad based"[8] he said. Burhanuddin Rabbani, the head of the Jamiat-e-Islami Afghanistan also felt that the interim government did not enjoy the support of the representatives of all parties[9]. Mohammad Karim Khalili, spokesman of the Tehran-8, strongly opposed it. To him the shura which chose the interim government was neither comprehensive nor was it duly elected. "The representatives have been selected by the seven Peshawar-based parties hence they do not reflect the will of those Afghan refugees and Afghan *Mujahideen* who are in Iran" said Khalili[10].

The AIG, however gained a political victory when the OIC foreign ministers meeting on 16 March, 1989 recognised them as the sole representative of Afghanistan and elevated them to 'a government in exile' by giving them the vacant seat of Afghanistan in the OIC[11]. Gulbadin Hikmatyar, the newly appointed Foreign Minister in the AIG, took his seat among the other foreign ministers representing the Muslim Ummah. Thirty seven Islamic countries had voted in favour of giving the AIG a seat. Two (Syria and South Yemen) had reservations and three (Iraq, PLO and North Yemen) abstained[12]. Four out of these five have socialist leanings and were supportive of Soviet policies around the world which prevented them from taking any action which would be seen as contrary to Russian interests.

Saudi Arabia and Sudan recognised the Afghan Interim Government. Malaysia followed later[13]. But inspite of Hikmatyar's visit to some other Muslim countries he did not receive the recognition he was looking for. The United States posted Peter Tomsen as the United States envoy to the AIG[14] in June, 1989 but it did not formally recognise the *Mujahideen* governmennt in exite. The reasons for not doing so as given by Tomsen were: (1). the AIG did not have the ability to go into international agreements; (2) it did not control any territory; (3) it could not govern the people it controlled and (4) it was not a functioning government.

None of these reasons were applied to the tripartite coalition of

Democratic Kampuchea. DK controlled no territory, it was not in a position to govern its people and it was not functioning as a government. But the United States and their allies got DK a seat in the United Nations and recognised them as the lawful government of Kampuchea.

The Pakistan government, which had played a major role in the formation of the AIG, did not consider it prudent to accord formal recognition to it just yet. They apparently wanted to wait and see whether the AIG would be able to acquire the trappings of a government in the near future. The AIG had to broaden its base, move into Afghanistan and exercise the functions of administration over some part of its territory. This did not happen and the recognition never came about.

Recognition of the AIG, which had not been able to include the Afghans living in Iran, would have embittered relations with that country. A situation which Pakistan would have never liked to get into again. National authorities in Pakistan were fully aware of the fragile nature of the AIG which had come into existence with a considerable amount of reluctance on the part of its members. It would have been a hasty decision if they had recognised the AIG soon after it was formed.

The *Mujahideen* went one step further towards becoming an acceptable government by having their first meeting inside Afghanistan. The meeting took place in Shewa Pass north of Khost. The President and the Prime Minister of the AIG were present but only six out of the twenty eight ministers attended[15]. Important Afghan leaders were absent. Gailani went away to Europe, Hikmatyar to the Middle East and Yunas Khalis to Saudi Arabia. Out of seven AIG parties, only four were present. This indicated the sharp differences between them. The large contingent of Pakistan and foreign media who had assembled in Peshawar to cover this historic event came back disappointed. This was the first and last of all such meetings. The AIG all but broke up and remained only in name thereafter.

The Scene in Kabul

Immediately after the withdrawal Najib was expecting a break down of law and order as the 'rebels' had infiltrated into the armed forces and other security agencies. He declared a state of emergency to be able to use the full powers of his government. To suppress any move to overthrow his regime he also carried out a

flag march (armed troops in vehicles moving on the streets) and manned important crossroads with armoured personnel carriers. The cabinet was dissolved and instead a Supreme Military Council (SMC)[16] was formed with Najib as its head. Other significant members of the twenty member Military Council were Colonel General Mohammad Rafi, Vice President; Colonel General Mohammad Aslam Watanjar, Interior Minister; General Shah Nawaz Tanai, Defence Minister; Mohammad Faruq Yaqubi, Minister of State Security and Abdul Wakil, Minister of Foreign Affairs[17]. The SMC was to coordinate all the military, economic and political activities of the Kabul regime.

Kabul took the initiative of asking the UN to establish a series of permanent posts along the Pak-Afghan border to stop the supply of arms and ammunition to the Afghan rebels which went unheeded although the UN had nominated Major General Raul Helminan along with 50 UN military officers from different countries to monitor the withdrawal. Kremlin sent letters to Iran, Pakistan, China, UNSG and to leaders of NAM, OIC, OAU, ASEAN, EEC and AL asking them to assist in a settlement of the situation in and around Afghanistan[18]. Gorbachev also proposed to USA to accept a call for the stoppage of the supply of arms to both the belligerents. Bush rejected the suggestion calling the Soviet proposal for an embargo as unfair since the Soviets had already provided the government in Kabul with a very large stockpile of lethal arms including the long range Scud B missile launchers. "For the United States to cut off support for the Afghan Resistance now, would lead to an unacceptable balance"[19] said the US President. As mentioned earlier USA did suspend supply of arms to the *Mujahideen* from November, 1988 to May 1989[20]. The reasons for discontinuing the military assistance were never given but it was presumably based on the assumption that the Kabul regime would fall soon after the Russian troop's withdrawal and that the *Mujahideen* would not need any more weapons. A lurking fear that sophisticated weapons in the hands of the so-called fundamentalist Afghan parties would not serve US interests in Afghanistan was perhaps also a factor which must have influenced the decision to cut off US military aid. A junior official of the US embassy was later blamed for the faux pas[21] as the cutting off of weapons at a critical moment, when the *Mujahideen* were launching their offensive against Jalalabad, proved to be one of the reasons for their failure.

Relative Strength

It was now a straight fight between the Kabul regime and the Afghan Resistance. What was their relative strength on the ground? The Afghan Army in early 1989 consisted of 30,000 regular troops; 100,000 para military forces which included 25,000 specially trained Sarandoy; 15,000 KHAD and 60,000 Tribal Militia; in addition there were 40,000 loyal and devoted Presidential Guards[22] making a total of 170,000, In terms of military hardware they had 620 tanks; 2 Scud B launchers with a range of 480 kilometres;[23] The Kabul army was by now battle hardened, well trained and well equipped. They were now to fight for their own survival which would give them greater tenacity and ferociousness.

Each major city had been turned into a fortress with security posts stretching out far and wide. Minefields, several thousand yards deep had been laid all around them. Dug-in tanks and machine guns positions were emplaced within the minefields. Artillery fire tasks had been co-ordinated with the lighter weapons. Food and ammunition had been well stocked to allow them to subsist even when besieged. Airfields were strongly defended[24] to prevent them from falling into 'enemy' hands.

Immediately after the withdrawal, however the Afghan army was further depleted because of some defections which took place soon after the Soviet armed forces left. According to *Mujahideen* sources about 3,000 Afghan soldiers came over to the *Mujahideen*[25] more would have surrendered if amnesty had been announced and implemented by the AIG or by the field commanders. The wanton massacre of some of those Afghan army personnel who laid down their arms put the fear of God in those who also had intended to do so. The size of defections, therefore, remained small and did not create a serious problem for Najib's loyal army.

The *Mujahideen*, on the other hand, numbered about 100,000 (those actively engaged in fighting)[26]. They were linked with one or the other political party based in Peshawar and Tehran and took orders from their respective Afghan leaders. Many of them formed independent fighting groups. Hence a coordinated effort by more than a couple of *Mujahideen* groups became difficult. Ahmad Shah Masud in the Panjsher valley was quite independent though nominally aligned to Rabbani's Jamiat-e-Islami. He had

never had good relations with the ISI and could not be relied upon to take instructions from them for the struggle ahead. Abdul Haq, around Kabul, owed allegiance to Sayyaf. Jalaluddin Haqqani took orders from Yunas Khalis and Ismael in Herat was virtually on his own. Half of Ismatullah Muslims 10,000 force, which operated between the Pakistani border and Qandahar, fought for the government and the other against it. The battle lines which were drawn after the Soviet troop's withdrawal were not between two armies but between government forces and a heterogeneous group of anti-regime elements.

Professor Gankovsky, summed up the situation in Afghanistan after the Soviet withdrawal by saying that 30 percent of the area was under the control of the Afghan government. The other 70 percent was divided between independent groups and those affiliated to the parties in Peshawar and Tehran[27]. The *Mujahideen* unfortunately did not have an organisation from where the struggle could be coordinated. Tactical cooperation for a particular offensive was often achieved but overall coordination for the war against Najib was totally lacking.

The *Mujahideen* were armed with fairly modern weapons but from a variety of sources. Their arsenal included Egyptian, supplied AK-47s; Chinese made anti tank rockets; US Stingers and British Blowpipes and of course captured Russian tanks. They also had a few pieces of field guns, Multi Barrel Rocket Launchers and heavy mortars. Such a conglomeration of weapons from different sources made ammunition supply difficult specially when it had to be carried on mules and donkeys over mountainous terrain far away from their stockpiles.

Military Operations

The AIG was on notice by their benefactors to liberate a city or two as early as possible. That would help in gaining recognition from a much larger number of countries. It would also increase the pressure on the Kabul regime, raise the morale of the *Mujahideen* and help in obtaining greater military and economic assistance from donor countries. They expected the recipients of their aid to show some positive results. Bringing an area under their administrative control would encourage the refugees to start going back.

The *Mujahideen* had so far been concentrating on attacking

Soviet and Kabul forces with the main aim of causing as much damage as possible. They had hoped that with casualties rising the morale of the Afghan army would go down and defections would increase forcing Najib to give up. Their tactics was based on ambushes and small scale attacks against outlying security posts. Firing long range rockets and using heavy mortars to damage installations and destroy ammunition and fuel dumps achieved results without the need for any close quarter battle. There was no serious attempt of capturing any major city and then developing the capability of defending it against counter attacks. After the Soviet withdrawal the need for liberating areas and retaining them became a politico-military objective. Unfortunately the freedom fighters had not, in the nine years of their struggle for 'independence', prepared themselves for a set piece attack against strongly fortified cities.

The advantages of capturing a major city were obvious and many but the disadvantages of attempting to do so and not succeeding were even greater. It was, therefore, necessary to make adequate preparations for this phase of the 'civil war'. Selection of the objective should have been done much earlier so that information about the nature and depth of defences could be obtained. Organising a combined task force to accomplish the mission was needed. Necessary weapons and ammunition for a major battle had to be provided. Training for fighting-in-built-up area should have been carried out by the *Mujahideen* under trained instructors. A common strategy to capture a city had to be worked out amongst themselves.

Differences in tactics existed. Some commanders were in favour of a direct assault, others preferred to besiege the cities till the Afghan army gave up and not to test their strength against fortified positions. Opinions differed on whether cities should be shelled or not. Concern was expressed about causing civilian casualties amongst relatives, and friends. A few felt that the defence should be crumbled by using the Trojan Horse method. This, however, was not something to be despaired of as differences of approaches exist amongst military planners but in a disciplined force a decision once taken is implemented by all and strictly enforced by all elements. Unfortunately the *Mujahideen* lacked this quality as there was no unity of command so necessary for a major military operation to succeed.

This was, therefore, a tall order for those engaged in guerrilla warfare and who traditionally had resorted to hit and run tactics. But there are no short cuts to total victory. If set piece attack was to be the future strategy full preparations for it were necessary. Courage, Faith and determination can make one a shaheed (martyr) but not necessarily a victorious *ghazi* (one who has participated in a *Jehad*).

Target Selection

The *Mujahideen* were ready for the kill. The enemy would throw their weapons and run. With the main props removed the Kabul regime was about to fall. This is what every body erroneously felt at that time. The only question was which city should be overrun first, Kabul, Jalalabad, Qandahar or Khost with much fanfare, but far less preparation, Jalalabad was chosen as the first target.

Jalalabad was apparently selected because it was the third largest city of Afghanistan (population 170,000)[28] and the capital of the southeastern province of Ningarhar. In the days of yore it was the winter capital of Afghanistan and a big trade and commercial centre. It was considered a gateway to Afghanistan. It was not only familiar to those who were acquainted with the Anglo-Afghan wars of the nineteenth and early twentieth century but it had also become famous because of the many battles fought between the *Mujahideen* and the Soviet/Kabul forces intermittently for over nine years. It lay on the main Peshawar-Kabul highway. Its capture would have opened the path for the seizure of the capital. It was only 50 kilometres away from Pakistan's border and on the traditional route to and from Pakistan.

Jalalabad was surrounded by hills which made shelling of the city from mountain hideouts comparatively safer. Being close to Pakistan and within the areas controlled by the *Mujahideen* infiltration into the garrison town was easier. Contact with those willing to defect or rise up against the Afghan army had been established since long, therefore defections from the army were to be expected. It was at the junction of the 'killing fields' of famous commanders like Ahmad Shah Masud, Abdul Haq and Jalaluddin Haqqani. The three main fighting groups, the Hizb-e-Islami (Hikmatyar), Hizb-e-Islami (Khalis) and the Jamiat-e-Islami, had worked in conjunction with each other in and around Jalalabad

for quite a while. The road from Kabul to Jalalabad could be easily interdicted as it ran through numerous defiles and gorges. Reinforcements from Kabul by road by the Afghan army would be difficult making the task easier for the *Mujahideen*.

Preparation

The *Mujahideen* laid siege to Jalalabad in November, 1988 even before the Soviets had left Kabul. The Russians had, however, vacated Jalalabad by then. By January, 1989 the freedom fighters had tightened the siege around the city. They had overrun the security outposts and had occupied position only 5 kilometres from the town. They were so sure of success that a council had been set up to administer the city after its liberation - counting the chickens before they were hatched. They even predicted that Jalalabad would be in their hands before 15 February[29], which was the last date for the Soviet troops to leave Afghanistan.

Some defences overlooking the city were gradually reduced in January, 1989. (By then the Soviets had left Jalalabad but were still in the country). The city was brought under rocket and mortar fire from nearby hills. According to Baktar news agency and Radio Kabul however life was normal in and around Jalalabad, the attack of the 'extremists' had been beaten back and heavy casualties had been inflicted on the aggressors. All India Radio reported that government troops had regained control over the region around Jalalabad[30]. The Soviet news paper Red Star while reporting the renewed fighting in Jalalabad, blamed Pakistan for sending twenty to thirty trucks a day laden with heavy weapons and ammunition from the depots in the Pakistani outpost of Landi Kotal and Peshawar[31]. The pressure on Jalalabad continued throughout February as well. Rocket attacks, bomb explosions and clashes within security posts kept the fighting alive. Plans for a major offensive on the city began soon after and thousands of *Mujahideen* from various factions began concentrating around the city.

Jalalabad Offensive

Jalalabad was the Headquarters of 11 Infantry Division. The Afghan army had about 4,000 to 6,000 regular troops defending the city. In addition there were 3,000 militiamen and 500 Jozjanis (special troops) in Jalalabad. The total strength of the government

forces in and around Jalalabad was estimated to be about 16,500[32]. The city was ringed with a large number of security posts each manned by 100 or so regular soldiers armed with heavy weapons and armour. A 3,000-yards deep minefield with dug-in tanks and machine guns within the mine belt covered all approaches to the city with interlocking fire[33].

Three weeks after the Soviet troops withdrew from Afghanistan, the much talked of *Mujahideen* offensive against the regime began with an attack on Jalalabad on 6 March, 1989. Nearly 20,000[34] freedom fighters belonging to eight guerrilla groups but mainly to Hizb-e-Islami (Hikmatyar), Hizb-e-Islami (Khalis), Jamiat-e-Islami and NIFA participated in the attack. Lieutenant General Uloomi, the commander of Jalalabad Garrison, put the strength of the guerrillas who participated in the offensive as 14,000. He also alleged that the attackers included 3,000 Pakistanis and Kabul Radio spoke of elements of Pakistan's 11 and 18 Infantry Division with their artillery complement taking part. These allegations were baseless and firmly denied by the government of Pakistan (Pakistan's 11 and 18 Infantry Division were far from the western border). The direct involvement of foreign forces was not substantiated except that two soldiers purported to be belonging to the Pakistan army, were shown on Russian television being questioned by intelligence agencies. The fact that they could produce two doubtful military personnel and that too at very junior ranks gave a lie to the claim that Pakistani armed forces were participating in the attack on Jalalabad.

The plan, alleged to have been made, by 'foreign experts'[36] was to first capture the hilltops dominating the city and then overrun the security outposts. The airport was to be kept under constant artillery fire to prevent reinforcements to be brought in. The city was to be attacked from three sides and a road block was to be established in the rear to cut off the route of withdrawal of the Afghan army. The Jalalabad-Kabul Road was to be secured to prevent any reinforcements from coming in from Kabul.

Ghaziabad Farm, which is 25 kilometres east of Jalalabad, was captured on 6 March without much resistance. The next objective was the strategically important garrison of Samar Khel 12 kilometres east of Jalalabad city. It was the Headquarters of the Afghan army's 11 Infantry Division. The cantonment was heavily garrisoned with very strong defences prepared by the Russians

who used Samar Khel as the pivot for their operations against the insurgents in the adjoining provinces. The area around Samar Khel consisted of low lying hills in which heavy gun emplacements had been dug in. Within the cantonment there were underground shelters for the storage of arms and ammunition. Mines and dug-in tanks within minefields added to the strength of the Samar Khel garrison. As airstrip provided facilities for supply of reinforcements by air.

Credit must be given to the courage and determination of the *Mujahideen* who captured this very important garrison town on the outskirts of Jalalabad city. A preparatory heavy artillery bombardment by rockets and missiles from overlooking hill tops had softened the resistance. The combined force of Gailani, Hikmatyar, Khalis and Rabbani succeeded in overrunning Samar Khel. It fell to the *Mujahideen* on the night between 7 and 8 March - two days after the offensive for Jalalabad had begun. It was a major victory. Thirty tanks were captured by the *Mujahideen* and 400 Kabul regime soldiers were killed while another 300 deserted. Plenty of weapons and ammunition fell into *Mujahideen* hands[37]. The *Mujahideen* also showed a considerable amount of tenacity and doggedness for holding on to Samar Khel inspite of the bombings and missile attacks by the Kabul regime forces.

The loss of Samar Khel was a great blow to the Kabul army. Not only did it result in loss of lives and military hardware but it also resulted in a loss of prestige as Samar Khel was one of the very strongly defended divisional headquarters. Also with the rebels strongly entrenched in a cantonment only 12 kilometres away, Jalalabad city became vulnerable to ground attacks from the *Mujahideen* operating out of that garrison. Kabul regime forces therefore put in several counter attacks on Samar Khel in an attempt to dislodge the Mujahideen but all of them were beaten back with heavy losses to the aggressors.

After capturing Samar Khel the next objective of the attackers was the main airport of Jalalabad the capture of which would have prevented any resupply and reinforcement to the government forces in the city. By 9 March a portion of the airport was captured and the runway made non-operational. Airport installations were damaged and numerous craters were made on the tarmac. But inspite of their best efforts the airport remained a

no-man's land. The aim of not allowing the Kabul regime to send supplies by air was however achieved.

Operations against the main defences of Jalalabad city had to contend with several concentric rings of security posts capable of providing covering fire to each other. The first phase of the attack on Jalalabad was to eliminate these strong points. Slowly and gradually these posts began to crumble. The *Mujahideen* had to move through open terrain which provided them no cover. They became extremely vulnerable to coordinated machine gun fire and aerial attacks. Before long the forward movement to the 'would-be-provisional-capital-of the-Afghan Interim Government' came to a halt. Both sides resorted to trench warfare - exchanging rocket, mortar and artillery fire with no territorial gains. The Kabul forces had the advantage of complete domination of the air against which the *Mujahideen* had very little protection. The Kabul air force was carrying out more then 20 sorties a day dropping cluster bombs which caused considerable casualties[38].

Soon the ammunition in the *Mujahideen* camps began to run out, tiredness crept in, and it was time to celebrate *Eid-ul-Fitr* with the families in the refugee camp in Peshawar. With a dwindling stock of ammunition and with a thinning out of the attacks the much awaited and greatly publicised Jalalabad offensive came to a halt with the city still in the hands of the Kabul regime forces. Radio Kabul said that 2,000 guerrillas had been killed. The freedom fighters accepted that 800 Mujahids had drunk the cup of martyrdom in the Jalalabad sector[39]. They claimed to have put to death thousands of Afghan communists. Lieutenant General Bragzar and Major General Mukhtar Gul, Afghanistan's most decorated soldiers were killed during the *Mujahideen* offensive against Jalalabad[40]. the Kabul regime did not give the figure of their own casualties but they too suffered very heavily. A large number of civilians were also killed in the artillery and aerial bombardments. Villages wee razed to the ground. Over 55,000 Afghan refugees fled to Pakistan to swell the number of the existing refugees to three and a half million. The Refugee Commissionarate reported 1,500 refugees coming in daily during the two weeks of fighting around Jalalabad[41].

The Afghan army launched a major counter-offensive against the so called 'rebels' in Samar Khel. The *Mujahideen* could not withstand the incessant bombing and rocket attacks any longer as

they did not possess an adequate number of anti-aircraft and anti-tank weapons. After four months of remaining in *Mujahideen* hands Samar Khel once again became an Afghan army garrison town guarding the approaches to Jalalabad. The Afghan army's push towards the Pakistani border town of Torkham, however, did not materialise.

The question that continued to be asked was what really happened? Who planned this attack, and why did it fail? The true answer would never be known as each side blamed the other. No documentary evidence was available for no records had been kept at the headquarters involved. Most of the 'directives' and planning was through verbal briefings by concerned authorities.

Well known personalities interviewed had their own story to tell. Professor Burhanuddin Rabbani, Minister for Reconstruction in the Afghan Interim Government, laid the blame squarely on outside forces. He felt that the *Mujahideen* had being directed to take certain actions from those providing them military and humanitarian assistance without giving due regard to their recommendations[12]. He compared the situation in the Kabul regime with that of the *Mujahideen* after the Soviet withdrawal. He pointed out that the Soviets had provided massive military hardware to their puppets but gave them complete independence in carrying out their military operations. This had raised their morale and increased their confidence. The *Mujahideen* on the other hand were not only receiving much less but were also being told what to do and how to do it. This was, according to him, one of the reasons why the *Mujahideen* had failed to achieve any substantial military victory. On being asked by the author whether even before 15 February control over the *Mujahideen* activities in Afghanistan was being exercised by a controlled system of distribution of weapons, he replied in the affirmative. "where and how they were actually used was", he said, "in the hands of the *Mujahideen* which now had been taken away". He was probably referring to the fact that if they had been left on their own they may not have tried to capture a strongly defended city in a hurry.

The urgency of liberating some territory where the AIG could establish itself was substantiated by General Hamid Gul. According to him it was the government of Pakistan which made the recognition of AIG conditional to capture of Jalalabad inspite

of his protestation. Professor Rabbani indirectly confirmed this. A well informed government official was of the view that the new prime minister initially went along with the policy of the previous government which was aimed at achieving a military victory over the Kabul regime[43]. She must have, therefore, accepted the planned attack on Jalalabad.

Yunus Khalis, the bravest of all the Afghan leaders in Peshawar and the head of his own faction of the Hizb-e-Islami, when asked by the author as to the causes of the Jalalabad fiasco maintained that no body forced the *Mujahideen* to attack Jalalabad it was their own decision to do so. He turned the question around by saying "why are we being criticised for just one failure. Why does the world not look at our victories and talk about them". He was right but the good that men do is often interred with their bones. It is the follies that live after them'.

The United States was also looking for *Mujahideen* victories as that is what its intelligence agencies and diplomats in Islamabad had been predicting. The US Ambassador had even specified a date when Jalalabad would fall. And so, according to some Afghan leaders the US also forced them into a conventional war which they had never fought and about which they were neither equipped nor were they prepared[44].

There was a pall of dismay as the *Mujahideen* reeled back to recover from the ill-timed, ill-advised and ill-prepared post-withdrawal offensive. All eyes were on Jalalabad. Some more Muslim countries were waiting to recognise the Afghan Interim Government as soon as it established itself on its own soil. Most American citizens were expecting the downfall of Najib any moment after Jalalabad was captured by the freedom fighters. Many Pakistanis had started believing in the prowess of the *Mujahideen*. The garrison at Jalalabad would defect and join their brothers in Islam who were knocking at the gates to liberate them from the pro-Marxist regime at Kabul was what they had begun to believe. But something went radically wrong. Out of the 12,000 Afghan army personnel in Jalalabad only a thousand or so left their posts and came over to their side. The remainders stood their ground and remained loyal to their units.

Afghanistan's 'garden city' was a test of strength between Najib and the Muslim guerrillas and the former had won the first round. It was the fiercest battle in the ten years of war in

Afghanistan which ended on a sour note for the brave *Mujahideen*. The objective was not achieved but neither did the Kabul regime succeed in flushing out the 'rebels'. They had faded away but still in control of the countryside around Jalalabad, still capable of laying siege to the town and lobbing rockets and shells on to the airport and city at will.

Causes of The Jalalabad Fiasco

It was not correct for the *Mujahideen* to lay the blame for the failure in Jalalabad to the fact that they were pushed into the battle by the ISI against their will. Jalalabad had been under attack ever since Soviet troops had moved into it. A serious attempt to 'liberate' the city was planned by the *Mujahideen* even before the last Soviet soldier had left the town. Hikmatyar had stated that it would be in *Mujahideen* hands earlier than 15 February, 1989. It was difficult to agree therefore with Professor Rabbani and other *Mujahideen* leaders that they were forced into attacking Jalalabad in a hurry by the ISI.

Hamid Gul's assertion that the government put pressure on the ISI to assure a major victory by the *Mujahideen* soon after the Russian withdrawal could probably be true. But this cannot be ascribed as a reason for the Jalalabad fiasco. The ISI had been involved with the *Mujahideen* for several years. It was expected that they would be fully aware of the fact that the *Mujahideen* did not have the ability to capture a well defended city. The plan to overrun Jalalabad appears, therefore, to have been based on large scale defections by the Kabul regime forces which did not occur. Why should more have given up after the *Mujahideen* video taped themselves slitting the throat of those who surrendered. Failure to assess correctly the loyalty of the majority of the Afghan soldiers to the government in power was a major factor for the Jalalabad offensive not to succeed. The unwanted massacre of those soldiers who defected made others to stay with their units.

The Kabul troops at Jalalabad were under attack not by a regular opposing army but by a force comprising of fighters from seven different factions each under the control of its own leader. The attack, therefore, was not coordinated to the desired level. One faction was reported to have gone into battle earlier than planned and another group was not in position to block the withdrawal route at the appropriate time. An overall commander whose orders were to be obeyed by all was missing.

The ISI could only persuade those elements, which received the major share of weapons through them, to follow the plan of attack. They had no influence over Ahmad Shah Masud whose men took orders from him alone. Ahmad Shah Masud was not in favour of a hasty attack. His complaint was that enough time for preparation of a major offensive was not given. "When you want to conduct a good battle it requires time. Just to go and round up people in the *Mujahideen* camps and tell them to go and fight was not the right thing to do" said Masud[45]. Lack of adequate preperation, therefore, was a major reason for the failure.

The greatest casualties suffered by the *Mujahideen* were due to air attacks and heavy artillery bombardment. This should have been foreseen by the planners and measures taken to minimise the effect by supplying the *Mujahideen* with a larger number of sophisticated anti-aircraft weapons. On the contrary military aid to the *Mujahideen* was withheld by the United States during that period.

The deep minefields surrounding Jalalabad also kept the *Mujahideen* at bay. Information about the depth of the minefields, and existing gaps was not available. Mine clearing devices had not been provided and the *Mujahideens* were not trained to negotiate minefields with minimum casualties.

Impact of The Jalalabad Offensive

What were the stakes involved in the Jalalabad offensive? For the *Mujahideen* it would have given them a major victory over the Kabul regime forces. The fall of Jalalabad could have had a snowball effect on the fighting in general and other cities may also have fallen as a consequence of a complete rout of the 'loyalist' forces. It would have raised the image of the freedom fighters in the eyes of their friends and allies and could have led to a recognition of the Afghan Interim Government by Pakistan and many more countries. The donor countries may have been encouraged not only to continue with their military assistance but also perhaps to increase it in order to speed up the demise of the pro-Marxist regime in Kabul. It would have become easier for the *Mujahideen* leaders to obtain funds and weapons from friendly nations having proved their worth on the battlefield.

Pakistan's Afghan policy may have continued on a more positive note instead of just drifting along after the Jalalabad

failure. The military solution could have been more forcefully pursued in the hope of a quick victory on other fronts as well. The Bhutto government would have felt more comfortable at seeing the Afghan problem moving towards a final solution. The Afghan refugees would have started going back to the liberated areas.

On the other hand the successful defence of Jalalabad without the direct support of Soviet troops raised the morale of the Afghan army. They had been able to beat back a major offensive of the rebels and caused them to fall back to their hideouts in the hills. The tall statements made by the 'insurgents' had not come true and their prediction that Jalalabad would fall in two days exposed the hollowness of their claims. The garrison troops had gained confidence in their ability to defend their city. Since the supplies and reinforcements could reach Jalalabad inspite of the city being besieged the troops did not feel very isolated even when the airport was made inoperative. Helicopters could still fly in through safe lanes.

Najibullah was able to consolidate his position further within the PDPA. They realised that he could deliver the goods when the chips were down. The Soviet Union felt that they would be able to retain their client in Afghanistan if appropriate military and economic aid could be continued. They could now bargain with the United States on the issue of Afghanistan from a position of strength. Their confidence in the Kabul army increased to an extent that Gorbachev could now rely on the Soviets to keep his army supplied with weapons and food in the coming months'.[46] His 'victory' at Jalalabad raised his hopes for negotiations with some of the field commanders.

Whereas he succeeded in ensuring an intermittent supply of his regime's pressing needs he could not sell his national reconciliation programme to those who had been opposing him. Najib's major problem of pacifying the Khalqi elements in his party could not make any headway either. The steadfastness of his army at the gates of Jalalabad did not help him in securing the cooperation of the hardliners in his party who were still insisting that he should not talk to the rebel field commanders. So while internationally he gained some prestige from socialist countries, domestically it did not help him very much in broadening his base amongst the PDPA or gaining acceptability inside Afghanistan.

Militarily also, while he retained the cities he could not prevent

them from remaining under constant rocket and artillery bombardment from rebel positions in the near by hills. His highly exaggerated predictions of clearing the entire province of Ningarhar right up to the border of Pakistan in a short span of time proved incorrect. Not only did the *Mujahideen* continue to occupy strong points dominating the vital - Jalalabad - Torkham highway but the *Mujahideen* and their supplies freely moved along the road from their refugee camps to the battle-field area. Jalalabad, Khost, Qandahar, Herat and many other places remained besieged cities.

In a frustrated tone Najib told the members of both houses of his Parliament "make any contact with the opposition you like, any contact you want. Make any proposal, any protocol to solve the problem and we will listen"[47]. Such words do not emanate from a man who is sure of his position.

The intensification of fighting around Jalalabad had a serious impact on the movement of good between Afghanistan and Pakistan along the highway to Torkham. This created a shortage of smuggled goods in the markets in Peshawar and elsewhere in Pakistan. Smuggling across the Pak-Afghan border is an acceptable 'profession' of a very large number of Afghans who have their depots and contacts on both sides of the Durand Line. The livelihood of hundreds and thousands of people in the Federally Administrated Tribal Areas (FATA) and the Frontier Province and as far away as Karachi, depended on the supply of 'duty free' foreign goods.

The free movement of transport laden with consumer items, through Mujahideen controlled territory was being seriously hampered by frequent checks, carried out by local *Mujahideen* militias. Complaints of attractive goods being take away and harassment of the agents involved in smuggling had also been reported. The biggest depot for the traders in Pakistan who dealt in smuggled items was in the Ghaziabad Farms on the Torkham-Jalalabad highway. Any restrictions on free movement between Jalalabad Gaziabad Farms and Peshawar had always been deeply resented.

During the battle of Jalalabad a delegation of tribal elders from the Khyber agency met Professor Sibghatullah Mojeddedi, the President of the Afghan Interim Government. They apprised him of the tension that had developed between the locals and the

Mujahideen because of the closure of the Torkham - Jalalabad road by the Mujahids. Tribesmen dealing with the business of smuggled goods expressed their indignation at the frequent blockades of the main highway. Such were the complexities of the Afghan conflict.

In some ways Najib's success at Jalalabad contributed to a change in Pakistan's Afghan policy. After the *Mujahideen* failed to capture their objective the government at Islamabad began to have doubts of pursuing the military option only. While not completely giving up their faith in the AIG and in the field commanders it was becoming obvious to the close aides of the prime minister that an option other than military should be followed up more seriously. General Hamid Gul, the powerful ISI Chief, and a strong advocate of the *Mujahideen* cause was eased out and replaced by a more malleable retired Lieutenant General (This was the first time that a non-serving General had been appointed to this sensitive post - placing the ISI more under the control of the civil government)

The fact that Hamid Gul's 'removal' was welcomed by the Afghan government shows that they perceived his role in the Afghan conflict as being detrimental to their interests. "His replacement is a strong step towards peaceful settlement"[48] said Mohammad Naim Aman, a spokesman of the Kabul regime.

Najib did succeed in getting an extension of the state of emergency from the 720-member Loya Jirga, which he called in May, 1989[49]. But, except for some non-descript field commanders who attended the Grand National Assembly, the main fighting groups paid no attention to his (Najib's) proposals for peace which be announced after having proved the Afghan army's military superiority over the 'extremists' in Jalalabad.

Khost

Having failed in their attempt to liberate Jalalabad the attention of the *Mujahideen* leaders turned towards Khost. The town had been besieged by about 2,000 freedom fighters for years[50], but several attempts to take it had met with failure, inspite of the fact that it had always been defended by the Kabul army only. No Soviet troops had been stationed there though they did assist in attacks against *Mujahideen* positions specially in giving them aerial support.

Khost was the headquarter of Afghan army's 9 Infantry Division with a strength of about 4,000 to 5,000 regular Afghan soldiers and a similar number of para military forces. It had an airstrip which was used for reinforcements and resupply. The area surrounding Khost was plain affording good fields of fire. The hills were at some distance but within rocket and artillery fire from *Mujahideen* strong holds, a concentric ring of security posts strengthened the perimeter of security. Minefields stretched upto a 16 kilometer perimeter[51]. Strategically Khost gave protection to Gardez the capital of Paktia and was, therefore, strongly held to prevent a threat developing to a provincial capital. Najib and his erstwhile Defence Minister Shahnawaz Tanai came from Khost and there was, therefore, an emotional reason for the defence of that city as well.

The *Mujahideen* were desperately in need for a liberated area close to the Pakistan border into which the AIG could move and establish a governmenti inside Afghanistan. Capture of Khost, not so well known as Jalalabad, could have been a face saving act. There was every reason to believe that a major offensive, properly planned and boldly executed could have led to the fall of this city

Jalaluddin Haqqani, the famous Hizb-e-Islami (Khalis group) field commander had been operating in the area around Khost for a long time. He knew the terrain very well. He was greatly respected by both the fighters inside Afghanistan and the leaders in Peshawar. Supply of weapons and ammunition would not pose much of a problem as the ammunition dumps were only a stone throw's away and safe in Pakistani territory. Everything pointed to a sure success, except that the enemy enjoyed total control in the air. Stingers, Blowpipes and the Chinese anti-aircraft weapons could bring down a few aircraft and helicopters but they could not prevent massive aerial bombardment by high flying Soviet built bombers.

Armed clashes between the *Mujahideen* and the Khost garrison had been continuing ever since the freedom fighters took up arms against the Kabul regime. These were, however, intensified after the withdrawal of the Soviet troops more so when the Jalalabad offensive began to flounder. In April, 1989 Baktar began reporting heavy fighting between the armed forces of the country and the extremists, including, according to it, Pakistan Punjabi army and Wahabis around Khost. "Organised and

supervised by Pakistani military officers the joint enemy forces attacked the residential areas of Khost with heavy arms. The 'heroic' armed forces repulsed these attacks as a result of artillery and air strikes"[52] reported Baktar News Agency.

The battle for Khost was the fiercest since the Soviet Afghan military offensive in the winter of 1987/88 to open the Khost-Gardez highway. In the ten days of bitter fighting between Afghans loyal to the Kabul regime and Afghans loyal to the *Mujahideen* commanders a number of security posts, some as close as five kilometres from Khost, were overrun. Some changed hands. The airport came under fire and remained closed. The fall of Durgai southeast of Khost was seen as a major victory as it lay along the route to other strong points and was a strategically important stronghold of the Kabul regime.

The offensive continued throughout May and several security posts were captured. Bloody battles had been fought only one kilometre from the centre of the Khost city and cantonment. Throughout the month the battle for Khost continued to rage but with little progress on the outcome. Both the *Mujahideen* and the Afghan armed forces used maximum fire power but did not or could not combine it with any forward movement. The result was a stalemate after the stocks of ammunition began to run low.

Casualties were heavy on both sides. The *Mujahideen* claimed to have captured 14 security posts lying on the outer perimeter of the security zone. Some very close to the city did fall into *Mujahideen* hands but could not be retained. A few tanks and guns were destroyed and about 100 Afghan armed forces personnel killed, an ammunition depot of the enemy was blow up and some thirty five Afghan soldiers including some senior officers were captured. No reports of major defections were made by the *Mujahideen*. Kabul regime reported over 1,000 'extremists' and their supporters killed in the one month long battle for Khost. *Mujahideen* sources accepted 500 killed and 1,000 wounded between 6 March and 10 April, 1989[53]. A huge quantity of heavy and light weapons, including a tank and some armoured cars was the '*mal-e-ghanimat*' (booty) obtained in the three weeks of fighting[54].

The failure of the Khost offensive in May was the second major set back for the *Mujahideen* after the Soviet withdrawal. The hopes of capturing a city faded away as the fighting around Khost

once again reverted to artillery and rocket attacks on the airport and military installation in and around the city. The reasons for the failure remained the same namely: lack of a common strategy between those participating in the offensive; unacceptable casualties because of enemy aerial bombardment in the open plains around Khost, and the inability of the *Mujahideen* to fight a sustained military operation against a fortified city. Another opportunity was frittered away.

The Kabul army troops in Khost, ironically, received their supplies of food from Pakistan. Tribesmen in Miranshah (Pakistan) are reported to have made fortunes by charging ten times the price[55]. Some Mahsud tribesmen, living in north and south Waziristan saw no harm in sending goods to the besieged city in return for huge sums of money provided by the Kabul regime. Loyalty can be rented and even bought amongst the proud Afghans.

Ten months after their unsuccessful attempt to capture Khost the *Mujahideen* once again turned their attention to this formidable fortress, a stone's throw away from their haven on Pakistan's territory.

In a rare display of unity nearly all of the Peshawar-based parties and their commanders in the field coordinated their efforts to try once again to liberate Khost which had remained out of their grasp since the last thirteen years. Allah, this time, granted their prayers.

They started advancing towards the garrison town on 2 March, 1991. Systematically they stormed and eliminated the border security posts around the city. Simultaneously they occupied the mountain passes which connected Khost with Gardez to prevent reinforcements coming in. Both the old and new airport of Khost was then their next objective. Soon it became unusable as the *Mujahideen* had advanced to within 200 metres of the airfield and the Kabul regime forces could no longer use it for resupply of their besieged garrison town. They lost two aircraft on 26 and 29 March while attempting to do so because of the automatic fire from the ground.

On 31 March, Khost was atlast in *Mujahideen* hands. One month of combined and determined efforts bore fruit. More than 2,000 officers and men of the Afghan army including some

generals were taken prisoner. A large amount of heavy weapons including tanks, artillery guns and aircraft came in their possession. About 500 Kabul regime soldiers were killed and a hundred or so *Mujahideen* lost their lives in this attack.

Radio Kabul, while accepting the fall of Khost, blamed Pakistan for becoming directly involved in the fighting inside Afghanistan and of violating internationally recognised norms. They could, however, not come up with any solid proof to substantiate their allegations - which, ofcourse, were not true. Infact it was reported that the Waziri tribesmen from Pakistan territory were fighting alongside Kabul regime forces against the *Mujahideen* for monetary gains.

Khost, unlike other cities, remained in *Mujahideen* hands, but they could not resist in quarrelling over the war booty. Different portions of the city and its surrounding area came under the control of rival political factions. The AIG, or whatever was left of it, failed to move into the liberated areas as it had once been planned.

The liberation of Khost was a great morale booster but it did not give rise to the domino effect. Though the *Mujahideen* continued to keep up the pressure on Qandahar, Kabul and Jalalabad the likelihood of any other major town falling to the *Mujahideen* was remote.

Inspite of the determination of the *Mujahideen* to fight on and their claim of having liberated a number of smaller provincial capitals their 'benefactors' were still not convinced that they would succeed in overthrowing Najib by force. The continued infighting amongst the various anti-Najib groups made it difficult to believe that a military solution to the Afghan conflict was still possible.

Kabul

After the ill-fated Jalalabad offensive and the inability of the *Mujahideen* to penetrate the defensive perimeter of Khost the anti-government forces turned their attention to the capital. Kabul had been under rocket and missile attacks even before the Soviet troops pulled out. The Afghan government supported by their Russian friends could not evict the freedom fighters from their strongholds in the surrounding hills. Major *Mujahideen* strongholds were at Paghman eighteen kilometres north of Kabul

where their caves are impervious to shelling and air attacks[56]. Frequent ambushes had prevented the smooth flow of supplies into Kabul. Hit and run tactics had caused serious casualties amongst soldiers of the Kabul regime and amongst the Red Army. *Mujahideen* had succeeded in infiltrating into the armed forces and into the civil departments but no attempt had so far been seriously made to launch an all-out offensive against Kabul.

The summer offensive of the *Mujahideen* after the withdrawal of Soviet troops included an attack on Kabul. This time the decision to go for the 'grand prize' was entirely their own as no pressure had been applied from outside to gain control of the capital. Previously the freedom fighters had blamed others for forcing them to attack Jalalabad. A spokesman of NIFA is reported to have said "we made one mistake and attacked Jalalabad on other's advice. We are not going to repeat that mistake" but they did so again.

The capture of Kabul, a city of over 2 million people[57] and held by 25,000 loyal soldiers of the Kabul army, was virtually an impossible task for the *Mujahideen*. The fall of the capital would have meant the end of Najibullah and all the 100,000 members of the PDPA. Fighting for their very survival they would not give in to what they believed to be a band of motely guerrillas. The bravery and sacrifice of the *Mujahideen*, though never in doubt, would not be enough to engage in a straight fight against a numerically stronger force supported by a modern air force in a heavily built up area.

The only method which had some chances of success was to either work from within or 'bomb them out'. The strategy eventually adopted was a combination of both infiltration and continuous missile and rocket attacks. Between 15 February and 30 October, 1989, according to official Afghan sources 14,000 rockets and missiles were fired by the counter revolutionaries into Kabul - killing more than 800[58] and injuring thousands of others, Tass put the casualty figures much higher.

The missiles fired from *Mujahideen* strongholds, thirty kilometres away, were not very accurate. Though aimed at military targets they often fell on residential areas causing casualties amongst non-combatants and damaging property. The Russians tried to gain political advantage from the somewhat indiscriminate missile attacks on Kabul by highly exaggerating

the figure of casualties. They claimed that 3,000 civilians died and 7,000 were wounded in the eight months since they pulled out. To cause greater resentment against the *Mujahideen* amongst some conservative Muslim states they went on to add that fifty mosques and holy shrines had also been destroyed. The intermittent falling of rockets which continued through the year created an atmosphere of fear in Kabul. A large number of Kabulis left the city due to the fear of being killed and due to the shortage of consumer goods. The population reportedly came down to 1.75 million.

The Afghan security posts in the surrounding hills, about twenty kilometres away from the centre of the city, were captured and again lost by the *Mujahideen*. Neither the insurgents could push through the outer defensive perimeter of Kabul nor were the Afghan armed forces able to flush the rebels out from their strong points in the surrounding hills. Though the freedom fighters did not have the ability to capture Kabul by a conventional attack they continued to be of nuisance value.

Th *Mujahideen* were also fairly successful in blocking the roads leading to Kabul from the Soviet Union. The convoy of 1,500 trucks bringing food and fuel to the capital took several weeks to cover a distance of 400 kilometres from the Russian border. A large number of vehicles and escorting armoured cars and tanks were destroyed. The Kabul airport came frequently under serious rocket attacks making it inoperative but the freedom fighters did not have the capability of making it permanently out of use.

March 6 Coup

The desired 'war from within', took place in March, 1990. The *Mujahideen* had been able to infiltrate their adherents in the armed forces and the possibility of a rebellion against Najib was always present. Occasional coups were attempted against Najib before but the most serious one was in March, 1990. General Shahnawaz Tanai, Najib's Defence Minister, who was a member of the Khalq faction of the PDPA, had serious differences with the Parcham faction to which Najibullah belonged. He advocated stricter measures against the insurgents and was not happy with Najib's national reconciliation programme. On 6 March, 1990 he along with a few more senior officers staged an unsuccessful coup against Najibullah. The pro-Tanai force bombed and strafed the Presidential palace but Najib, who had been tipped off by his

intelligence agencies, had moved to a safer location. Forty eight tanks moved out from their units (24 from 8 Division at Paghman and 24 from Pule-Charkhi) in support of Tanai[59] Troops loyal to Najib knocked out thirty tanks of the advance columns of the armoured division which had joined the rebel force. Without much ado the half-hearted elements of the armoured formation went back to their barracks. Although Defence Minister Tanai and the Chief of Air Staff, General Abdul Qader, were both present at Bagram air force base only a few pilots obeyed their orders to bomb the presidential palace. The Afghan army regained control of the capital within a few hours and the short lived coup was suppressed[60]. This was, however, the most serious coup attempt against Najib after the Soviet withdrawal.

Dr. Tanai, his air force chief and their families flew out in a helicopter to Pakistan. Strangely enough Gulbadin Hikmatyar, a rabid anti-communist, accepted Tanai and took him under his protection. The 'marriage of convenience' between two previously bitter enemies surprised many. The other Afghan leaders in Peshawar were against cooperating with a person who had been instrumental in killing thousands of their brethren. They were not willing to break bread with a die hard communist who acknowledged that he remained a Khalqi even after coming away from Afghanistan. They even demanded his trial. Hikmatyar, however, was made of different stuff. He was pragmatic and willing to adjust his principle as long as he could achieve his objective, in this case the overthrow of Najib. He would even sup with the devil if that would help him in doing so. Knowing Tanai's political leanings and being fully aware that he disliked the *Mujahideen* he was still prepared to use him to remove Najibullah.

Tanai was reported to be in Afghanistan and cooperating with the Hizb-e-Islami (Hikmatyar) in their 'war' against Najibullah. Tanai belonged to the Tani tribe which is one of the four tribes which live around Khost. He was reported to have gone to Khost after his unsuccessful coup to arouse his own tribe against Najib but failed to do so . Najib also comes from Khost and from a larger and more respected tribe. There were reports that Tanai had been given asylum in Pakistan and that the Hikmatyar-Tanai combination had the blessings of the ISI.

Najib cracked down on the dissidents. Over six hundred

officers and men were arrested including three generals and many colonels and majors[61].

Infighting Among Mujahideen

The Afghan *Mujahideen* did deserve all credit for having been instrumental in evicting the Soviet troops from Afghanistan. Among other reasons for the Russian withdrawal the tenacity, courage and sacrifice of the insurgents cannot be minimised nor will it ever be forgotten. Another golden chapter had been added to their history. Their successful military compaign against the forces of a superpower will be enshrined in the records of wars of national liberation. But, unfortunately, the unsavoury side of the Afghan character also came to the forefront. Tribal feuds, ethnic rivalries and the Afghan tradition of *'badal'* reared its ugly head which had an adverse effect on the ongoing struggle against the Soviet planted Kabul regime.

The cold blooded murder of Syed Bahauddin Majrooh, the head of the Afghan Information Centre at Peshawar in August, 1988 was considered to be the work of the Hizb-e-Islami. Majrooh, a one time professor of law at the Kabul University, was a royalist and a moderate. His writings and activities were not appreciated by the conservatives who could have been instrumental in his elimination. Some reporters pointed a finger at Hikmatyar's men for this unwanton murder.

The most serious infighting which diverted the energies of the resistance from their main objective, that of expelling Najib, was between the two strongest *Mujahideen* groups. the Hizb-e-Islami of Gulbadin Hikmatyar and the Jamiat-e-Islami of professor Burhanuddin Rabbani. After the debacle at Jalalabad and Khost all eyes were turned towards Ahmad Shah Masud, the most famous of all the *Mujahideen* field commanders. He was working out a strategy for the summer offensive against government controlled areas. Commanders from the northern provinces of Takhar, Kunduz, Badakshan and Baghlan were to meet to discuss plans for the coordination of their effort in their struggle against the pro-Marxist government, on 9 July, 1989. However Said Jamal Agha, field commander of the rival Hizb-e-Islami (Hikmatyar) ambushed 30 Jamiat-e-Islami commanders in a gorge in the province of Takhar in northeastern Afghanistan, an area under the domain of Ahmad Shah Masud. Five of the field commanders ambushed died on the spot. The remaining twenty

five were taken prisoners and executed the next day. The mutilated bodies of some of them were returned to the Jamiat but no trace was found of the others who were killed by their own Muslim brothers[62] not by the 'infidels'.

The tragic incident created a very serious rift between the two most effective factions of the IUAM. Najibullah must have felt happy at this internecine warfare. The supporters of the Afghan *Mujahideen* were dismayed. The Afghan cause received a set back. Hikmatyar was put in the dock and his relations with donor countries specially the United States further deteriorated. The matter was down played by the Hizb-e-Islami. It was, according to them, a stray incident in which Said Jamal had acted on his own. The Hizb also countered the allegations by saying that Jamiat men had killed a number of Hizb followers sometimes earlier. But these belated observations by Hikmatyar did not pacify Ahmad Shah Masud nor his mentor Burhanuddin Rabbani. They continued to blame the Hizb-e-Islami for deliberately planning this ambush and that they had been preparing the ground to commit this crime[63].

Hikmatyar did regret this massacre of the *Mujahideen* belonging to the Jamait-e-Islami. In a wireless message from Parwan province he is reported to have said "we not only discourage but hate this strife ..... I strongly condemn those persons who committed this offence against their own Afghan brethren". He appealed for unity amongst the *Mujahideen* and blamed foreign powers for aggravating the situation. He suggested that the matter be taken up with the Afghan Interim Government. The rivalry between Hikmatyar and Rabbani was, however, so deep rooted that the former's words of regret were not sufficient to assuage the bitter feelings which the Takhar assassinations had aroused. The Jamiat Chief refused to accept any conciliatory move until the killers were arrested and handed over to him[65] He was joined in the condemnation of the assassins by all other leaders of the AIG with the exception of the Hizb-e-Islami (Khalis)[66].

The infighting between the two *Mujahideen* groups took a more serious turn when Ahmad Shah Masud launched a major attack against the base of Hizb-e-Islami commander Said Jamal Agha. After several weeks of intense fighting hundreds of freedom fighters died and Jamal and his associates were captured.

(Hikmatyar claimed that Jamiat had killed 300 Hizb *Mujahideen*. Masud however said that only fifteen Hizb fighters had died in the operation)[67]. This infuriated Hikmatyar. He criticised Rabbani for declaring a war against Hizb after the Takkar incident and for taking pride on the arrest of Hizb commander Syed Jamal Agha. He alleged that Jamal was arrested in connivance with the Kabul regime forces. He said "his party would pay back in the same coin if Jamiat did not stop the fighting and did not release the Hezb *Mujahideen*"[68]. (The allegation by Hikmatyar that Rabbani had extended his cooperation to the Kabul regime goes back to the Daud period when the Jamiat Chief differed with the Hizb in the tactics to be followed in opposing Daud's policies. Hikmatyar was wanting open confrontation against the government of Daud while Rabbani wanted to work from within in order to force him to rescind some of his anti-Islamic policies).

A tribunal consisting of six representatives of *Mujahideen* parties in the Interim Government, one Pakistani and one Arab was constituted and was apparently sent to Takhar to try and resolve the dispute but nothing was heard of it. Hikmatyar, feeling that he was at the wrong end of the stick, criticised Mojeddidi, the President of the AIG, for being partial in this matter and therefore decided not to attend the meetings of the AIG any longer. But before the tribunal could meet and arrive at some conclusion Masud's men executed Jamal along with a few of his supporters in a classic case of *'badal'* sending shock waves in the camps of Hizb-e-Islami. That was the last straw on Hikmatyar's back. He decided to break off from the AIG permanently.

The infighting had not been confined to the province of Takhar only. Reports of clashes between *Mujahideen* groups had been received from Badakshan where 300 members of the Hizb and Jamiat were killed[69], and from Helmand in the southwest where fifty to hundred *Mujahideen* were assassinated in the internecine fighting in August, 1989[70].

Killings and assassination of important leaders of the various groups continued. Malang and Mohammad Azam, both belonging to NIFA were killed by the rival faction on 8 September, 1989[71]. A few days later a *Mujahideen* commander, Kochay Sangardost, was ambushed by another *Mujahideen* group[72]. Abdullah Ezzam, a leading Arab supporter of the *Mujahideen*, was killed along with his two sons in a bomb explosion on Jamrud Road near Peshawar

on 24 November, 1989[73]. Mullah Mohammad Nasim Akhunzada of the Harkat Inqilab-e-Islami was gunned down along with five companions near Pabbi, twenty kilometres from Peshawar on 24 March, 1990[74]. Rival factions were blamed for his murder. A pro-Saudi Afghan leader Moulvi Jamilur Rahman was killed in August, 1990.

Some of these brutal acts could have been the work of KHAD but most of the infighting was certainly the result of differences and animosities between the *Mujahideen* themselves.

Sibghatullah Mojeddidi while commenting on the atrocities committed by Hikmatyar said "For nine years USA has told me that he is the hero of the *Jehad*..... I told them that he is a terrorist. He is killing our people"[75].

Casualties

The casualties during the first twelve months of the civil war (21 March, 1989 to 20 March, 1990) amounted to over 3,000 killed. The Afghan army lost 2,217 soldiers and 840 *Mujahideen* were martyred. *Mujahideen* claimed that there were 4,668 defections from the Kabul regime forces[76]. From March to June, 1989 two thousand three hundred surface to surface missiles were fired into Kabul killing 550 and wounding 1,500 residents[77].

Lessons Learnt From The Civil War

After a spurt of military activity by the *Mujahideen*, immediately after the withdrawal of Soviet troops, they have fallen back to the normal routine of guerrilla tactics against the Kabul regime forces which too is diminishing as the zeal and ammunition is running out. It is time for them to ponder over the reasons why their attacks against the cities did not succeed and why the Afghan army did not rise against the pro-Marxist regime. What are then the lessons which the freedom fighters should learn from the reverses they have suffered during their assault on Jalalabad, their earlier attack on Khost and their intermittent missile attacks on Kabul?

The failure to overrun a well defended population centre brings out clearly the fact that different bands of guerillas cannot be converted into a conventional force over night. It takes years and millions of dollars to organise, equip and train a professional army capable of carrying out various types of missions successfully.

The military balance in Afghanistan, both in numerical and qualitative terms, was sufficient for a low-intensity guerrilla conflict. Greater military build up was necessary for a major conventional attack against a well entrenched enemy.

Conventional warfare needs unity of command. A set piece attack, more so against major fortifications, requires the coordination of the effort of various arms and services. It is all the more necessary when the force consisting of different fighting groups is operating under several party leaders. Disagreement on how, when and where to put the main thrust weakens the impact of an intended military operation.

Under present day battle conditions concentration of forces without a fair amount of air cover or without a very effective air defence system results in unacceptable casualties. (Though *Mujahideen* were equipped with the latest short range surface to air missiles but they could do little against medium and high altitude bombings).

A properly organised fifth column within the enemy's forces pays considerable dividends. An uprising or a coup d' etat compensates for a lack of conventional military superiority but this too must be centrally planned and carried out in a professional manner. Expecting people to revolt against established authority or persuading them to defect leaving behind their families in enemy hands or risking their lives when carrying out subversive activity requires a very high degree of motivation. If soldiers do not know what treatment will be meted out to them and whom to defect to, they are likely to stay on in their units.

Tall claims of capturing this or that city within days did help in raising the morale of the *Mujahideen*. It probably put the fear of God in the hearts of the defenders but when the leaders could not match their words with deeds the credibility of the leaders was lost. Not only the supporters and aid givers but also the fighters lost confidence in their commanders when rash statements predicting major victories were made knowing them to be false. Goebell's style propaganda pays no dividends.

Whenever more than two or three fighting groups combined to carry out an operation a common strategy should have been evolved and strictly implemented. Differences of opinion as to how to reduce a target or whether or not civilian casualties should be

avoided should have been sorted out before the attack commenced. If cities and population centres were to be captured civilian casualties had to be accepted. There was no way of avoiding death and destruction in a populated area since the defences were strong and could not have been breached by non-conventional means.

It should have been evident that the same spirit of *Jehad* would not prevail amongst the *Mujahideen* when fighting against fellow Afghans than when evicting a foreign invader.

A solution based purely on the results of a military conflict is never lasting. The vanquished will continue the struggle if he perceives to have been forced into a position of weakness. To ensure a measure of peace and stability a political dialogue along with military pressure is absolutely necessary. Political strategy is as vital as military tactics.

Notes

1. Pakistan Times, 4 January, 1981.
2. Hikmatyar's press conference at Islamabad on 16 April, 1990. According to him Mujahideen controlled 241 out of 282 electoral districts in Afghanistan in April, 1990.
3. Daily Telegraph, London, 1 June, 1989.
4. Khaleej Times, 22 October, 1989.
5. Afghanistan Report, Islamabad, Number 60, April, 1989, p. 62.
6. Khaleej Times, 9 October, 1989.
7. Saudia Gazette, 25 October, 1988.
8. Afghanistan Report, Islamabad, Number 59, March, 1989, pp. 41, 42.
9. Ibid.
10. Interview, Khalili at Tehran.
11. Saudia Gazette, 19 March, 1989.
12. Nation, 19 March, 1989.
13. Khaleej Times, 14 April, 1989.
14. Muslim, 30 June, 1989.
15. Pakistan Times, 11 March, 1989.
16. Afghanistan Report, Islamabad, Number 59, March, 1989, p. 43.
17. Kabul Times, 20 February, 1989.
18. Afghanistan Report, Number 50, March 1989, p.46.
19. Ibid.
20. Washington Post, 15 July, 1989.
21. Muslim, 21 September, 1989.
22. Saudia Gazette, 11 October, 1989.
23. International Institute of Strategic Studies, London, Military Balance 1988-89, p. 153.
24. Louis Dupree, interviewed by the Author in October, 1988 at Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad.
25. Afghanistan Report, Number 58, February, 1989, p. 1.
26. Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad.
27. Lectures delivered by Professor Yuri Ganovsky in February, 1990 at the Pak-Soviet Friendship Society meeting at Rawalpindi, attended by author.
28. International Herald Tribune, 15 May, 1989.
29. Afghanistan Report, Number 58, 1989, p. 15.
30. Afghanistan Report, Number 58, February 1989, p. 17.

31. Afghanistan Report, Number 58, February, 1989, p. 19.

32. Guardian, London, 10 April, 1989.

33. Louis Dupree - interviewed by author.

34. Guardian, 10 April, 1989. The figures vary widely. Times of India, 6 April, 1989 gives a figure of 10,000.

35. Gulf News, 3 May, 1989.

36. Nation, 20 March, 1990. Eqbal Ahmad, Professor at Hampshire, claims that US Ambassador to Pakistan, Robert Oakely, the CIA Station Chief and some Pakistani officials took the decision on 5 March, 1990 for the Jalalabad offensive. According to him no Mujahideen were present.

37. Afghanistan Report, Number 60, April, 1989, p. 18.

38. Times of India, 6 April, 1989.

39. Khaleej Times, 3 October, 1989.

40. India Today, 15 April, 1989.

41. Chief Commissioner Afghanistan Refugees.

42. Interviewed by the author, at Islamabad on 12 December, 1989.

43. Interviewed by the author in May, 1990.

44. New York Times, 23 April, 1989.

45. Newsweek, 8 January, 1990, p.

46. Gulf News, 4 May, 1989.

47. Khaleej Times, 25 August, 1989.

48. Saudia Gazette, 25 August, 1989.

49. Pakistan Times, 21 May 1989.

50. Far Eastern Economic Review, 26 April, 1990, p. 73.

51. Ibid, 7 December, 1989, p. 31.

52. Afghanistan Report, Number 61, May, 1989, p. 16.

53. Muslim, 11 April, 1989.

54. Muslim, 2 September, 1989.

55. Far Eastern Economic Review, 26 April, 1990, p. 73.

56. Khaleej Times, 2 May, 1990.

57. Daily Telegraph, 17 May, 1989.

58. Muslim, 20 October, 1989.

59. Globe, April, 1990, p. 42.

60. Narrated to the author by Fida Yunus, Pakistan's Charged' Affairs in Kabul.

61. Guardian, London, 12 March, 1990.

62. Muslim, 20 July, 1989.

63. Ibid.

64. Ibid, 21 July, 1989.

65. Ibid, 29 July, 1989.

66. Ibid, 30 July, 1989.

67. Ibid, 29 August, 1989.

68. Ibid, 21 September, 1989.

69. Ibid, 31 August, 1989.

70. Ibid.

71. Muslim, 9 September, 1989.

72. Ibid, 11 September, 1989.

73. Ibid, 25 November, 1989.

74. Ibid, 27 March, 1990.

75. Newsweek, 21 August, 1989, p. 8.

76. Afghan Jehad, Peshawar, Vol. 3, No. 2, January-March, 1990, p. 16.

77. Khaleej Times, 16 April, 1990.

9 Sovietisation of Afghanistan

> My spirit will remain in Afghanistan though my soul will go to Allah. My last words to you, my son and successor, are: Never trust the Russians.
>
> **Abdur Rahman Khan**
> Amir of Afghanistan, 1880-1901

During more then three decades of establishing close ties with Afghanistan the Soviet Union made considerable inroads into certain sections of Afghan society. Kabul became more and more dependent on Russian military and economic assistance as the relationship grew from a friendly neighbour to a near client state. But inspite of Moscow's best efforts and use of military force neither Brezhnev nor his successors could transform Afghanistan from its independent tribal character to a subservient satellite.

Mr. Yevgeny Primakov, accepted the bitter fact that Afghanistan was not ready for communism. It was not possible to change their age old customs and beliefs[1]. But this fact dawned on them far too late. For thirty long years they tried to sovietise Afghanistan and bring that country into the Soviet orbit.

Military Dependency

The 'Russification' of the Afghan air force began as early as 1921[2]. By 1936 Afghanistan began receiving Soviet arms regularly[3]. It was, however, during Daud's prime ministership that the Soviets succeeded in becoming the main suppliers of military hardware. Soviet penetration into the Afghan armed forces began in July, 1956 when the Soviets agreed to a $32 million concessionary loan for the purchase of Russian arms at cheap prices[4]. By 1978 the sum total of arms sold to Afghanistan



An Afghan family migrating
Photograph, Courtesy: Asia Study Centre, Islamabad.



A school for Afghan children
organised at an Afghan refugee camp near Peshawar
Photograph, Courtesy: Asia Study Centre, Islamabad



A Market
established on a self help basis by Afghan refugees
scene at Nasir Bagh Refugee Camp near Peshwar
Photograph, Courtesy: CCAR, Islamabad.



Water Storage and Distribution Point
for Afghan refugees, prepared by UNHCR/GOP Refugee camp at Kot Chandua Isa Khel, District Mianwali, Punjab.
Photograph, Courtesy: CCAR, Islamabad.



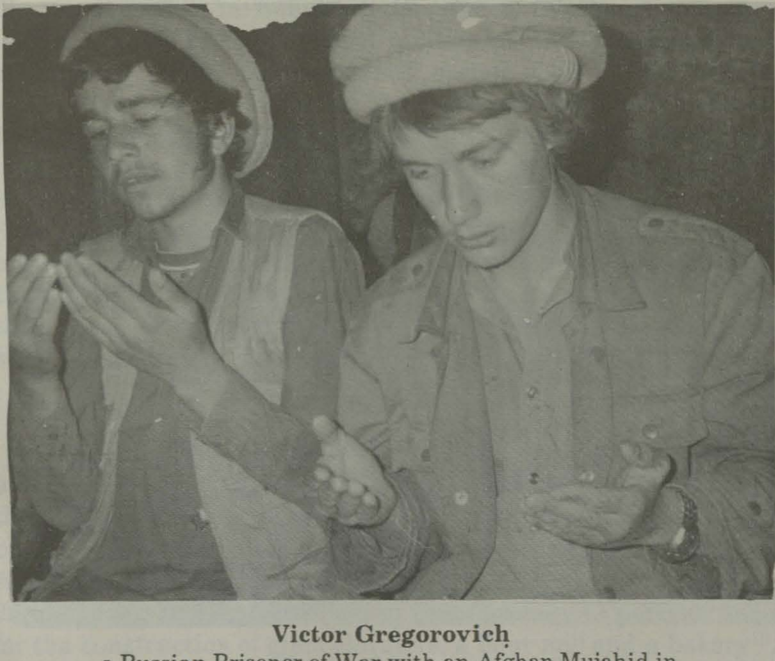
An Innocent Victim of the Afghan Conflict
Photograph, Courtesy: Director Medical Services, CCAR, Islamabad.



Saudi Red Crescent
providing medical assistance to the Afghan Refugees at a refugee camp near Peshawar.
Photograph, Courtesy: CCAR, Islamabad.



Author in Front of West German Project
for the assistance of the Afghan refugees at
a Refugee Camp near Peshawar.



Victor Gregorovich
a Russian Prisoner of War with an Afghan Mujahid in
Panjsher valley.
Photograph, Courtesy: Afghan Media Resource Centre.



Sŏviet Soldiers
bid farewell to their Afghan Comrades.
Photograph, Courtesy: Soviet Embassy, Islamabad.



Withdrawal of Soviet Troops
from Afghanistan.
Photograph, Courtesy: Soviet Embassy, Islamabad.

came to $1,250 million[5]. Afghan armed forces improved their effectiveness but they lost their ability to act independently as all the strings were in Soviet hands. Supply of ammunition, despatch of spares, replacement of damaged weapon systems, imparting of training were controlled by their benefactors. The indoctrination of the Afghan officers while in the Soviet Union ensured the presence of a hard core of communists within the armed forces. By the time of the Saur Revolution the Afghan army and air force had been fairly well infiltrated by the communists- the majority having become members of the Khalq faction of the PDPA.

The gradual involvement of the Russians in the armed forces of Afghanistan can be judged from the size of their military advisers which grew with each passing year. In April, 1978, just before the coup, there were only 250 advisers from the Soviet army and air force in Afghanistan. They were more than doubled in the next three months. By September, 1979 the figure had risen to 2,000[6] and by December the same year i.e. just before the invasion there were twice that number[7]. Bruce Amstutz, the US Charge d' Affairs in Kabul, at the time of the Soviet invasion, estimated 7,000 to 10,000 Soviet military advisers in Afghanistan in January, 1980[8]. As mentioned earlier about 7,000 Afghan junior officers had been sent to Russia to receive military training during the period 1961-1970[9]. The training commitment continued throughout the next decade and a half giving the Soviets an opportunity to mould the Afghan armed forces along Soviet lines. Nearly 100 percent of the military hardware had come from the Soviet Union or from its satellites. even after a change in the government in Kabul the Afghan armed forces will, therefore, have to depend on the Soviets for the maintenance and supply of spares and ammunition for a long time to come.

Economic Ties

Just as the arms 'embargo' on Afghanistan pushed the Afghan armed forces into the lap of the Soviet Union in the middle '50s so did the stoppage of transit facilities by Pakistan provide an opportunity for Moscow to increase its economic links with the Afghans. Moscow's economic aid to Afghanistan began in January, 1954 with a $4.5 million concessionary (3 percent) loan for the construction of grain elevaters, a flour mill and a bakery[10]. By 1978 the Soviet economic aid totalled $1,265 million. The Russians built highways, tunnels, hydro-electric plants, fruit

canneries, cement plants, hospitals and air ports. Some 120 industrial, agricultural and other projects were undertaken. All these meant a greater dependence on Moscow. About 650 Soviet technicians were already in Afghanistan before the April '78 pro-Marxist' coup. This number rose to 1,500 and by 1983 there were between 5,000 to 8,000 Soviet civilian advisers in Afghanistan[12]. Pyadyshev quotes a former Soviet ambassador as saying "At the Kabul Polytechnical there was a Soviet adviser on water plumbing. The advisers marched in crowds from one ministerial office to another getting into each others way and snarling at each other like a pack of dogs". Najib acknowledged that it was the advisers who wrote the text, which was read out by the high placed Afghan official at most meetings. "The Afghan advised the Russians decided" commented Najib[13].

Amstutz could not be far wrong when he said that Karmal's body guards, driver, chef and doctor were all Russians and that in addition he had six chief Soviet advisers.

During Daud's first prime ministership (1953-1963) a large number of agreements were signed with the Soviet Union. They included subjects of air communication (March 1956); border conferences (1958): tele-communication (July 1959); Hydro-electricity (August 1959); cultural exchange (March 1960); river port (March 1960); press service exchange (December 1960); housing construction (April 1962).

In the late 1950s students at the Kabul University began seriously studying the economic model of the Soviet Union and found it a recipe for the removal of the injustices being committed by the landed elite. This was, however, confined to a small group of intellectuals, It was only after the formation of the PDPA in January, 1965 that its members gave serious thought to introducing radical reforms in the agricultural sector to bring it in line with that of the Soviet Union.

The dependency on the Soviets increased when they helped in exploiting natural gas in northern Afghanistan and began importing the entire gas into the Soviet Union. It will be difficult for Kabul to find alternative markets as its other two neighbours have large quantities of gas fields themselves. In any case it will be more cost-effective to export the gas to Uzbekistan and Tajikistan than to lay new pipe lines to Pakistan and Iran over difficult mountainous terrain.

After the April, 1978 Coup, the cooperation with the Russians in the economic field greatly increased. A permanent Afghan-Soviet Commission on Economic Planning and Cooperation was set up. Trade protocols were signed and the value of goods moving across the Oxus grew by leaps and bounds. The imports from the Soviet Union in 1986 stood at $400 million and the exports to that country touched $526 million[14]. The total trade having more than tripled in ten years. The economy of northern Afghanistan, in particular, became very much in tune with that of the neighbouring Soviet Central Asian Republics.

Since the communist take over, Afghanistan lost all economic contacts with the 'free world' and thus became more and more dependant on the Soviet Union and other socialist countries. Over 90 percent of its foreign aid came from Moscow and East European capitals. The total commodity support package in the ten years of Soviet occupation came to $1.4 billion[15]. This was the largest foreign aid given by the Soviets to any country in a decade.

The Soviets exercised so great a control over Afghanistan that they did not permit any other county to carry out projects in area bordering the USSR. Even UN experts were not allowed to work north of the Hindu Kush. Movement of all foreigners, other than Soviets, was restricted along the Afghan-Soviet borders.

There were about 5,000 Russians in Afghanistan working on more than 63 economic projects by the end of 1985[16]. Many of the projects were the result of direct negotiations between the neighbouring provinces on either side of the Afghan-Soviet border giving the relationship a more intimate and durable character. The economic dependency on the Soviet Union can be judged from the fact that electric power is supplied to the Afghan provinces of Kunduz and Mazar-e-Sharif from power stations in Russian Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. These linkages cannot be easily broken as no other neighour of Afghanistan can provide such assistance to the northern areas of that country. Such direct connections between local Soviet and Afghan official organs are likely to endure even after the change of government in Afghanistan.

The Soviet-Afghan trade has been increasing steadily. When peace returns to Afghanistan and the border with Pakistan is officially opened a large portion of the trade would recommence with Pakistan and India. But Russian goods would still find a prominent place in the trade between these countries. Most of the

Afghan leaders based in Peshawar have already expressed their willingness to continue economic cooperation with the Soviets.

Political Linkages

Although the Soviet Union did not categories the PDPA officially as a communist party, because it wanted to retain the flexibility of calling Afghanistan an independent country, the PDPA was included in the fraternity of numerous pro-Soviet revolutionary parties.

After the Saur Revolution the attempted sovietisation of the Afghan polity increased manifold. The political structure was copied from the Soviet model. The People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan became supreme in all government activities. The familiar socialist terms of politburo, central committee, council of ministers and presidium came into use. At lower levels also the various committees and semi-government institutions were modelled after those in other socialist countries. Party members were recruited from all sections of society including students, teachers, intellectual, civil and military officials, peasants and workers. Afghanistan became a single party state like that in the Soviet Union with the PDPA expanding its membership from around 5,000 in 1978 to nearly 100,000 after the Saur Revolution.

The political linkages with the Soviet Union of course will be downgraded considerably if a radical Islamic government is installed in Kabul. But the CPSU would maintain contact with members of the PDPA and other progressive elements in Afghanistan to ensure that a pro-Soviet nucleus remains in Afghanistan. With the collapse of Communism in Russia this linkage may be downgraded.

Moscow would be concerned if attempts are made to encourage Islamic resurgence in its Muslim Republics by any government in Kabul.

Education

In the educational sector also Moscow made several inroads. The emphasis was on the ideological training of the younger generation. The syllabi at schools and colleges were modified to include Marxist-Leninist teachings. Courses of study at the Kabul University were changed and subjects like revolutionary history of workers, dialectical materialism and scientific sociology were

introduced[17]." Teachers from the Soviet Union replaced those Afghans who had left the country. A large number of scholarships were offered to Afghan students. According to reliable sources more than 50,000 Afghan youth received their education in the USSR[18] and other socialist countries during the period 1978 to 1988. The courses of instruction in the Soviet Union included the teaching of the Russian language which was made compulsory. The extended duration of the instructional period assisted the Soviets in indoctrinating the young minds.

Much of this has changed ever since Najib began his national reconstruction programme. It would not take too long for a new government to bring back the syllabi and curriculum to the pre-revolutionary period. Pockets of young intellectuals imbued with socialist idea are likely to remain. Their linkages with scholars and academicians in the USSR would probally be retained.

The Social Science Institute in Kabul had been organised along Soviet lines. This personnel training centre had the support of the communist party of the Soviet Union. It trained more than 10,000 cadres in ten years since 1979[19] who were inducted into both the civil and military departments. Though a small capital yet Kabul could boast of having the largest civil services academy in South Asia as 3,500 party cadres could receive training at any one time.

Information Media

The information media was totally controlled by the State which in turn was indebted to Moscow. The press, radio, television and the cinema were all used to spread the party's propaganda. The advice, direction, supervision and monetary support came from the numerous Soviet advisers present at all levels in the ministry of information and culture. The Russians had flooded the Afghan bookstores and libraries with Soviet literature. Radio and television programme included documentaries on the life in socialist countries. Kabul newspapers frequently published articles by Russian authors. With a larger proportion of the literate population now knowing Russian the Soviets could continue to propagate their ideas through the information media.

Communication Infrastructure

In the late 50s and early 60s both the Americans and Russians were building strategic roads and airfields in Afghanistan. After

the Russian invasion the Soviets further developed the communication infrastructure. More so in northern Afghanistan and along the Afghan-Soviet border. Most of the provincial capitals in the north were inter-connected and linked to cities in Soviet Central Asia. Road and rail bridges constructed by the Russians over the Oxus made it easier to travel between the two neighbouring states. Railway tracks were extended southwards into Afghanistan which expedited movement of goods and personnel. Even when peace returns the newly developed road and rail link with the Russian Republics would be useful for trade and transit. Even Pakistan entrepreneurs are planning to use these routes to establish commercial relations with Central Asia.

Transit to The Sea

Being a land locked country Afghanistan had to depend on a transit agreement with Pakistan. Ever since Pakistan closed the traditional Afghan route to the Arabian Sea Afghanistan turned its attention northwards. After the Soviet invasion the orientation changed completely. Goods from Afghanistan could now reach Europe even quicker than they did before when they had to go through Karachi. It is doubtful, therefore, if this newly established pipe line would be abandoned even after an Islamic regime takes over the reigns of government in Kabul.

Nationalities Issue

Another area where the Soviets showed a great deal of interest was in building up the nationality issue in Afghanistan. They tried to reduce the dominance of the Pushtuns in Afghan society and gave greater importance to the other nationalities with whom their own Central Asian Muslim Republics had much in common. The Tajiks, Uzbeks and Turkomens had been kept subdued under the Durrani dynastic rule. So were the Hazaras, Farsiwans and the Nuristanis. The PDPA following the Soviet model gave greater autonomy to the different nationalities in Afghanistan, irrespective of their numerical strength. A ministry of tribes and nationalities was established. Local languages and customs were preserved. Children studied in their own mother tongue. All this appeared to be a step forward in appeasing the dissatisfied minorities. The advantage which the Soviets derived from this was the affinity they hoped to achieve, in the long run, between their citizens in Central Asia and those Afghans living north of the Hindu Kush. This measure, according to Soviet thinking, would

ensure that at least northern Afghanistan remained under their sphere of influence even after the PDPA lost control of Kabul.

A new government, however Islamic it might be, would not be in a position to reverse these policies which had given the minorities a greater say in their local affairs. Language and culture are sometimes more binding then religion more so when all profess the same faith. The possibility of a reverse flow of influence would also be there if a conservative Islamic government with pan-Islamic ideas takes power in Kabul. The possibility of an Islamic revival in the Muslim Republics of Soviet Central Asia would become more plausible.

The Soviet Union is likely to play the ethnic card if the new rulers of Afghanistan adopt anti-Soviet policies. Just as Zahir Shah and Daud had tried to instigate the Pathan and Baluch dissidents to demand a separate homeland for themselves the Tajiks, Uzbeks, Turkomens and Hazaras could be aroused to claim independence for their areas.

Security Agencies

In addition to the armed forces all other security agencies were also patterned along the lines of their Soviet counter parts. The police and para-military forces became organs of the PDPA. The most dreaded was KHAD which kept a watch over all government officials, reporting against those who showed any inclination to oppose the policies of the pro-Marxist government. It had its tentacles in schools, colleges and universities. Its agents oversaw the media coverage. KHAD, which had a reported strength of 30,000[20] also organised compulsory Marxist ideology programmes, taught the Russian language and moulded Afghan society towards the Soviet model. The Soviets are likely to continue their linkages with these Soviet trained Afghan secret service personnel even after Najib's downfall.

Kabul Retraces its Steps

The efforts to transform Afghanistan into a communist state however, did not succeed. Taraki and Amin tried to force the pace of reforms and met stiff opposition. Najib realised the folly of trying to push his people too far along the communist road. He therefore changed tracks and while still adhering to the Marxist philosophy he decided to retrace his steps and modify socialist systems to local conditions.

The Soviets had all along been advising Najib's predecessors to go slow in the implementation of the reforms, to patch up the differences between the Khalq and the Parcham and to broaden the base of the PDPA. Najibullah took the advice more seriously. He launched his national reconciliation programme which among other things, was meant to allay fears amongst his fellow citizens that their religion or tribal customs were in danger if the PDPA stayed in power. To pacify the anti-Communists he changed the name of his party. Henceforth it bgan to be called *WATAN*.

Efforts at Sovietisation Remain In-effective

The attempted sovietisation of Afghanistan did not change Afghan society substantially. More than one third of the Afghan population remained out of the country and so was uninfluenced by the socialist reforms introduced by the pro-Soviet regime. Those living in the outlying provinces and under the control of the Mujahideen field commanders were not subjected to the changes brought about by Taraki and his successors. It was only a small minority of the urban educated class who were members of the PDPA or were supportive of the present regime's pro-Soviet policies. It was after all a small communist party that carried out the Saur Revolution. It did not have a large enough base even in the cities and almost none amongst those in the countryside. The infighting between Khalq and Parcham further weakened the PDPA. The Afghan society as a whole, therefore, had not undergone any major change inspite of the efforts by the protagonists of Marxist philosophy to do so.

Afghanistan could not become a communist state also because of the unique character of the April, 1978 pro-Marxist coup. Unlike the Chinese Revolution it was not a peasants revolt against feudal landlords and imperialist 'lackeys'. The countryside did not surround the cities. The Saur Revolution did not work its way from the bottom upwards. On the contrary it was forced down the throat of the silent majority by a group of dedicated urban communists.

Neither could the Marxist coup be compared to the Iranian Revolution which changed the entire spectrum of Iranian society. The mass uprising against an autocratic and despotic ruler was missing. There were no large scale demonstrations in the capital unlike the ones in Tehran during the last days of the Shah. Kabulis did not come out in the streets and face the spray of bullets from helicopter gunships.

The PDPA also lacked a charismatic leader. There was no Mao, Che Guevara or a Khomeini amongst the PDPA who could change the face of the country. The three PDPA founders were devoted communists no doubt but they could only recruit the middle class urban population. Although they had infiltrated into the government departments and into the armed forces but they had only penetrated the surface. Their followers were limited to a small number of relatively junior officers and a few hundred soldiers and airmen. PDPA leaders could bank only on about 100,000 of its dedicated members to take Afghanistan out of its centuries old beliefs, traditions and customs.

An alien ideology can only take root if it has been implanted in favourable terrain and has been carefully nurtured. To get the desired results it has also to be multiplied to include a large enough area so that it does not wither away when adverse winds blow. This did not happen with the Soviet inspired socialist reforms in Afghanistan. Sovietisation of a backward, tribal ridden and deeply religious society was well nigh impossible. It took the hardliners in Moscow a decade to understand the reality of the situation in their backyard.

A revolution can also succeed and the orientation of a country can be altered by the armed forces of a nation provided they themselves are not split and a struggle between the loyalists and the rebel forces does not ensue. In Afghanistan a military coup did take place but only a small number of the men in uniform were convinced of the need for a complete change in the socio-political conditions of the country. The majority of them were tired of the economic exploitation by the monarchy and the feudal landlords and wanted an end to both. But they were soon disillusioned by the oppressive nature of the new socialist regime. The infighting between the two factions of the PDPA; the innumerable arrests; the torture in captivity; the mass genocide; the hurry to discard old values and bring in new ideas; the downgrading of religious practices and the blind attachment to an atheistic philosophy was disliked by many in the armed forces.

The PDPA and their backers have so far failed in achieving their objectives. Any hope of Afghanistan becoming a socialist country on the Soviet model is therefore unlikely.

Linkages With Soviet Union Would Remain

While the political and social changes introduced by the pro-Soviet leaders have not been accepted the economic dependence

on the Soviet Union is almost certain to remain even after Najibullah and his regime have been replaced. The linkage between northern Afghanistan and the Soviet Central Asian Republics has always existed and has further been strengthened by the Soviets during their eleven years of involvement. The Afghans may be dogmatic and rigid in their beliefs and traditions but they are also practical enough to do business with any one even if it is the enemy - as long as it brings them profit. While the Peshawar-based leaders blame the '*Shuravis*' for all their ills the Afghan traders see nothing wrong in bringing in Russian goods from across the Oxus and disposing them off in Pakistan's '*Bara*' markets as a regular means of livelihood. Obtaining assistance from the Soviet Union in the reconstruction and economic development of their country even after the removal of Najib and his cohorts is not only possible but also realistic.

Though the Russians have not been able to sovietise Afghanistan they are bound to retain a measure of influence in that country because of geographical contiguity and strong economic linkages. Trade with the Soviet Union will continue. Aid for reconstruction will be accepted. Along with that will come some technicians and experts. Spares and ammunition from Soviet Union will have to come for the Afghan armed forces. Being a landlocked country Afghanistan will not foreclose the transit route to Europe through Russia.

Notes

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9. Urban, p. 14.
10 Amstutz, p. 24.
11. Ibid.
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16. Ibid.
17. Strategic Studies, Volume 12, Number 1, Autumn, 1988, p. 84.
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19. Nasim Rizvi, Strategic Studies, Volume 12, Number 1, Autumn, 1988, p. 84.
20. Afghanistan Forum, Volume 16, Number 2, March, 1988, p. 16.

10 Endless Trek

> "Any one has the right to seek and enjoy, in other countries, asylum from persecution".
>
> Article XIV of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 10 December, 1948.

More than one third of the total population of Afghanistan was forced to flee from their country because of the domestic unrest in their homeland due both to internal and external factors. The exodus began in 1973 when Sardar Mohammad Daud staged a bloodless coup and overthrew the monarchy. Those loyal to the former King had to seek shelter elsewhere to avoid being persecuted by the new regime. Some of the well-to-do and the elite went to Europe and America. Many settled down in neighbouring Pakistan which became a temporary home for about 1,500 Afghan refugees during that period[1].

The April, 1978 Saur Revolution threw up a group of die hard communists who, inspite of not having a popular base, were determined to make radical changes in the socio-economic life of their country. Their oppressive measures plunged Afghanistan into a civil war between the traditionalists and the reformers. This disrupted the normal life of the Afghan people who moved out to safer havens beyond their borders. Some went to Iran but most of them came across the Durand Line. By the middle of 1979 the refugee population in Pakistan had grown to 109,000[2]. In September, 1979 another struggle for power in Kabul took place in which Nur Mohammad Taraki was replaced by Hafizullah Amin. The infighting increased forcing more Afghans to leave their country. By December, 1979 the registered refugee population in Pakistan had risen to 402,100[3].

The endless trek of Afghan refugees (AR) both towards the east and west, however, began when the Soviets sent their troops into Afghanistan to protect the wabbling pro-Marxist regime in Kabul. The Russian's southward move internationalised the Afghan conflict. The Mujahideen were no longer alone in resisting the communist regime in their country. The United States and their allies provided military and humanitarian assistance to the Afghan resistance which resulted in an undeclared war in Pakistan's backyard. As the conflict intensified more and more refugees poured into Iran and Pakistan. By July, 1980 the Afghan refugee population in Pakistan alone had crossed the 1 million mark. The outflow of refugees was directly proportional to the intensity of fighting inside Afghanistan. It was during the scorched earth policy and the saturation bombing by the Soviets in 1981 and 1982 that the maximum number of Afghan men, women and children had to flee their country. The figure of Afghan refugees in Pakistan was more than doubled in just eighteen months. By January, 1982, two and a half million Afghans had sought shelter in Pakistan. As the intensity of the fighting reduced the rate of influx of refugees also came down. From January, 1982 to December, 1985 (four years) only 500,000 refugees came into Pakistan. During the next three years (1985-1988) the exodus came down further as only 250,000 crossed the Pak-Afghan border in that period. Throughout 1989 just 40,000 refugees were added to the total of 3.25 million and that too because of the Jalalabad offensive by the Mujahideen in March, 1989. The total refugee population on 15 February, 1990 stood at 3,670,364[4] in Pakistan. Most Western sources estimated the number of Afghan refugees in Iran as about 2.1 million[5]. The Iranians however put the figure at 3 million[6]. An analysis of the rate of flow of the Afghan refugees reveals the fact that the Afghans left their homes to avoid being caught in the cross fire and not merely for ideological reasons.

The Refugee Organisation in Pakistan

To cope with such a large number of refugees and to coordinate the assistance being provided by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and other private volunteer organisations (PVOs) a Chief Commissionarate for Afghan refugees was established in Islamabad in 1980 under the Ministry of States and Frontier Regions (SAFRON). It was headed

by Brigadier (retired) Said Azhar who was responsible for all aspects of the relief operations. This became more and more complex as the number of refugees grew and as the donors multiplied.

To be able to exercise greater control over the assistance programme the refugees were grouped together into a number of refugee tented villages (TRVs) each comprising of a maximum of 10,000 refugees and was placed under an RTV administrator who was responsible for all aspects of welfare and discipline within the 'refugee village[7]'. The refugees were provided with temporary shelters, food, water and bedding. Arrangements were made for looking after the health of the refugees, imparting of education and providing vocational training at each RTV. There were a total of 350 RTVs in Pakistan with the maximum concentration being in the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) followed by Baluchistan. There was only one refugee camp in Punjab at Mianwali.

All incoming refugees were required to be registered after which they were issued with refugee pass books which entitled them to the assistance being provided by the government of Pakistan and the several UN agencies. While most of the Afghans who sought shelter in Pakistan had been registered, there were about 500,000 unregistered ARs. Over 100,000 of the these found their way to Karachi and a similar number lived and worked in Quetta[8]. Movement of ARs within Pakistan was unrestricted unlike refugees in other countries. (In Thailand the Kampuchean refugees were confined to their camps close to the Thai-Kampuchean border where shelter, food, schools and hospitals were provided).

Special mention must be made of the Afghan Refugee Health Programme prepared by the UNHCR in coordination with the Directorate of Health at the Chief Commissioner for Afghan Refugee's Office at Islamabad. Besides the UNHCR, WFP, WHO, UNICEF and ILO there were 60 other private volunteer organisations and welfare agencies from more than two dozen countries which were rendering humanitarian assistance to the Afghan refugees. A very large number of dedicated volunteer organisations were spending their time, energy and money to provide succour to these unfortunate human beings.

These angels of mercy put up their tents in the refugee camps.

They provided medical aid, distributed food, handed over blankets and ran schools and dispensaries. There were several others who were operating inside Afghanistan giving emergency aid in the battlefield in improvised operation theatres. They were saving human lives under most difficult and very often dangerous situations. Nancy Hatch Dupree, Director of the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Refugee's (ACBAR) in Peshawar devoted the best part of her life to the welfare of the women and children of Afghanistan. She spent most of her time in Peshawar organising relief and rehabilitation for the female population of the Afghan refugees. Some of the foreign volunteer workers were killed, some were taken prisoners and a few lost their lives at the hands of those whom they had come to look after.

Paskistan's policy towards the Afghan refugees was very lenient. Because of historic, religious and ethnic ties they had been given complete freedom to move about within the country which occasionally resulted in tension amongst the local population. "We are of the same blood, it is our duty to help them" says one of the tribal elders to a visiting journalist. Qazi Hussain Ahmad, Amir, *Jamait-e-Islami Pakistan*, opined that "A Muslim enjoys a certain privilege to go and live among fellow Muslims anywhere on his God's good earth[9]". Hence the Afghan refugees were welcome to stay in Pakistan. Not many Muslims in Pakistan and elsewhere go along with his pan-Islamic theory. Several Pakistani politicians often made hostile statements against assistance to the Afghan refugee. Initially they were welcome but as time went by and the numbers increased the locals began to resent their presence. Dr. Ijaz Shafi Gilani, Director of the Pakistan Institute of Public Opinion, Islamabad, noted a slight decline in the public support for Afghan refugees between the period 1982 to 1984[10].

In the Kurram Agency, close to the Pakistan-Afghan border the Afghan refugees outnumbered the local inhabitants. Every third person in the Tribal Areas of Pakistan was a refugee. No restrictions had been placed on the carrying of weapons, holding of meetings, making political statements and organising armed guard for the protection of their leaders. Neither were they prevented from plying any occupation or carrying out any business. Inspite of this *laissez-faire* attitude and perhaps because of it, there was no major outbreak of violence or an expression of animosity between the guests and the hosts. The Pakistani people,

specially those living in the Frontier and Baluchistan provinces, sheltered nearly 4 million Afghan refugees and an equal number of cattle amidst them for over 10 years without too much of resentment. Nowhere in the world had such a large body of foreign nationals lived for so long over such a large area without creating serious disturbances. Credit must go to the government of Pakistan and to the efficient manner in which its policies had been implemented by the Chief Commissioner of Refugees and his dedicated staff, to the UNHCR, the World Food Programme (WFP), the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the other UN agencies and to the individual countries who responded to this great human tragedy. Foreigners were surprised to find that no major untoward incident had taken place. If in any other country three million refugees had arrived in a society ...... it would have been a catastrophe. Yet in Pakistan no major incident had occurred said a Western journalist. The spirit of hospitality was, however, wearing thin.

Implications

Article XIV of the United Nation's Universal Decleration on Human Rights of December, 1948 gives the right (to the refugee) 'to seek and enjoy, in other countries, asylum from persecution'. He has however certain obligations which he must fulfil during his stay in a foreign land. Article 11 of the declaration makes it binding on him to conform to the country's laws and regulations. while he is permitted under article XVII to engage in wage earning employment he is not allowed to carry out activities which are prejudicial to the safety and security of the country of asylum. None of the 46 Articles of the declaration gives the refugee the right to carry weapons[11].

Movement of the Afghans across the Pak-Afghan border was nothing extra-ordinary. Geographical proximity, climatic similarities, religious, racial and ethnic bonds, a common language, family ties, better economic prospects and of course the traditional and well known Pathan hospitality were some of the reasons why the Afghans had been welcomed by the tribes living along the border. Although the movement of people in the reverse direction has not always been accepted. In the early 1920s thousands of Indian Muslims migrated to Afghanistan, which they considered to be a *dar-ul-Islam* (House of Peace), to escape persecution by the British rulers. the Afghan government did not

look after them and they found themselves completely stranded and destitute and were forced to return thoroughly disappointed with their Afghan brethren)[12].

Continuous stay of the world's largest number of refugees in Pakistan did however result in serious socio-economic problems and even jeopardised its security. "If we stay too long there is the potential for clashes[13]" confided the late Dr. Syed Majrooh, former editor of the Afghan Information Centre at Peshawar. Scarce water resources could have been shared with a dozen Muslim brothers and sisters but not with hundreds and thousands of Afghan guests and their cattle for unlimited days. Some trees may have been allowed to be cut for fuel and warming purposes but when the entire countryside was denuded of even the stumps and soil began to erode some authority had to prevent this from happening. Senator Jamal Said Mian, who comes from a highly respected family of Parachinar, a border town in the fertile and picturesque valley of the Kurram Agency, was extremely bitter against the Afghan refugees who turned his cool retreat into a semi-desert[14].

When shops and carts belonging to the refugees appeared in the town, selling consumer items and when the locals found themselves being eased out of the market affection for the displaced changed to anger. When the refugees were willing to work at construction sites for lesser wages than the locals, anger turned to violence. Almost all the transport trade in the NWFP moved into Afghan hands. they earned but paid no taxes. This created ill-will and the refugees began facing an increasingly hostile host community as the years rolled by. The locals in Peshawar also complained about the rise in house rents as the demand for houses increased due to the large number of well-to-do Afghan emigrees who could afford to rent houses at a higher than market rates.

Economic Burdens

For nearly two years (April, 1978 to January, 1980) - the government of Pakistan bore the burden of the refugees alone[15]. The UNHCR and other relief agencies began their support in January, 1980. Pakistan claimed to have been spending nearly a million dollars a day on the Afghan refugees[16] in addition to the indirect economic costs of damage to roads, felling of trees, drying up of wells and a myriad socio-economic problems. The short falls

between the pledges made by donor countries and actual delivery of food items during the period 1986 to 1989 amounted to 387, 509 tonnes of wheat, 15,520 tonnes of edible oil, 2,000 tonnes of sugar and 5,403 tonnes of dried skimmed milk (DSM)[17]. These short falls had to be made up by Pakistan. Besides, the benefactors did not pledge any support to the additional Afghan refugees which came after the Soviet withdrawal. Pakistan had to bear the total economic burden of looking after these fresh arrivals. The 45,477 Afghan refugees who came to Pakistan between March and December, 1989 became the responsibility of Pakistan alone[18]. The government of Pakistan's budgeted expenditure on the welfare of these Afghan refugees came to $32.900 million in 1989[19], (The invisible costs have not been included). The UNHCR assisted the Government of Pakistan in organising the programme for the welfare of the Afghan refugees. The total UNHCR expenditure between the period 1980-1985 amounted to $34,208,956 on the health programme alone.

Demographic Changes

The influx of refugees also affected the demographic character of certain areas in Pakistan. The Kurram Agency was the most affected. Lieutenant General (retired) Jamal Said Mian complained about the change that had occurred in the precarious balance between the Shias and Sunnis in his tribal area. "Previous to the Afghan conflict the Shias were in a majority and they could pursue their religious practices without let or hindrance. Nearly 400,000 Afghan refugees, who were all Sunnis tilted the balance in their favour" said Jamal. Their practices and belief clashed with those of the Shias which caused serious tension at times. The authority of the Shia elders in the Kurram Agency (Jamal being one of them) was affected because of the large non Shia foreign element now present amidst them[20]. The Kurram valley was one of those areas where the Afghan refugee population outnumbered the locals.

Similarly, according to Dr. Akbar S. Ahmad, the well known anthropologist of Pakistan, the ratio between Pathans and Baluchis changed in the Quetta valley because of a large number of Afghan Baluchis who took refugee in that area[21]. This was substantiated by, Lieutenant Colonel (retd) Abdur Rahman Ahmadzai Commissioner Afghan Refugees in Quetta. Lt. Col. (retd) Abdul Majid Babar, former Joint Secretary in the Ministry

of States and Frontier Regions, Government of Pakistan and a senior citizen of Quetta, himself a Pushtun, did not agree with this assessment. According to him Quetta and surrounding areas had always had a majority of Pushtuns.

Corruption

Corruption in the handling of relief items, quite expectedly, crept into the RTVs as well. Some by unscrupulous individuals and some out of necessity. Babar, admitted that the strength of the Afghan refugees could have been exaggerated by the head of the families for obtaining extra rations. "In any case Rupees fifty ($2/-) per person per month was not enough to enable them to buy necessities other than those provided at the RTVs. They were therefore, probably selling their rations and foreign items which they could do without to purchase goods of immediate necessity[22]". said Babar.

Ahmadzai, was a little more emphatic about selling of rations by the Afghan refugees. He believed that the system of dispersing rations on the basis of number of ration cards produced without the head of the family himself being present had led to large scale corruption at various levels[23].

Drug Trafficking

The Afghan refugees by and large kept out of trouble but cases of smuggling (which is an accepted occupation in tribal areas) increased. The government closed its eyes to the so called '*Bara*' markets in Pakistani towns where smuggled goods were openly available. Most of the these markets were run by Afghan refugees. The more dangerous trade was that of drugs. Some Afghan *Mujahideen* found it profitable to engage in drug trafficking as it gave them plenty of money to buy weapons. Unscrupulous Pakistanis and foreigners used these Afghan refugees as carriers thus encouraging the drug trade even more. The Afghan conflict contributed a great deal in increasing the drug flow through Pakistan. Cases of drug addiction in Pakistan as a consequence increased manifold - reaching a figure of nearly 2 million addicts in 1990[24]. Aitizaz Ahsan, Minister of Interior and Narcotics Control in the Bhutto Government, while speaking at the Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad acknowledged that the "Afghan refugees in Pakistan was a major factor behind the profuse inflow of drugs and guns into the Pakistan society"[25].

Roedad Khan, former Interior Secretary, Government of Pakistan, acknowledged that though Pakistan did face a drug problem even before the Afghan conflict it was aggravated after the flood of Afghan refugees. "Afghan opium started coming across the border. Heroin laboratories came up in the tribal areas. Smuggling of drug became a lucrative business" said Roedad Khan.

Subversion

Refugees by themselves did not become a source of concern to the integrity and national solidarity of the country where they had taken shelter. It was only when they decided to take up arms and fight for what they perceived to be their just cause that they became a risk to the government under whose protection they were living. The activities of these refugees, in trying to liberate their country from foreign occupation and an illegal regime, were not contrary to international law. The UN also recognised liberation movements even when they operated from outside their own country. It was, however, in the implementation of this right that they began to impinge on the peace and security of their country of residence.

The ARs were affiliated to various political Afghan groups who freely operated in Pakistan. They held political meetings inside refugee camps, asked for volunteers to go and fight inside Afghanistan, gave them weapons and military training. In an effort not to embarrass their hosts Afghan leaders in Peshawar claimed that this was done inside Afghanistan but it was a well known fact that training was imparted on Pakistan territory most of the time.

With an undeclared war raging in Afghanistan and with the freedom fighters operating from Pakistan's soil it was logical to expect retaliation from the Kabul regime. Since a direct attack on Pakistan or even hot pursuit to destroy the *Mujahideen* bases was beyond the capability of the Kabul forces the only way to put some pressure on Pakistan was to carry out subversive activities. The KGB and KHAD were reported to be behind most of the bomb blasts occurring almost weekly in the major cities of Pakistan during the days when the Geneva Accord was nearing finalisation. Though the official inquiry report on the Ojhri Camp disaster, in which a major arms and ammunition dump of the Afghan freedom fighters was blown up, was not published it was widely believed that it was the result of sabotage. Whatever the cause

panic struck the twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi as shells, rockets and missiles fell from a major arsenal in the middle of a congested locality for over two hours killing hundreds of innocent civilians and destroying a large number of houses. A Federal Minister travelling in his car was hit and died before he could be taken to the hospital. A school teacher trying to shepherd her young students to a safe corner was struck and breathed her last before their very eyes. A housewife lost her mind as rockets tore through her roof. Such and much more was the cost Pakistan had to bear for its involvement in the Afghan conflict.

General Zia down played these subversive activities. The bomb explosions and rocket attacks were, according to him, not too great a price to pay for eventually having an Islamic government in Afghanistan. All, however, did not agree with him. There were many who wanted Pakistan not to get too deeply involved in the Afghan issue. They would rather see the Afghan refugees going back as soon as possible after the withdrawal of Soviet troops and sorting out their problems within Afghanistan themselves.

Proliferation of Weapons

What concerned the ordinary citizen was also the proliferation of weapons due to the Afghan conflict. Not only were the arms and ammunition supplied by donor countries sold in the open market but the once crude armament factories of Darra Adam Khel (a tribal area between Peshawar and Kohat) began producing sophisticated weapons. The locally manufactured Kalashnikov was selling for Rs. 3,000 ($120), the Chinese made went up to Rs. 15,000($700)[26]. German G-3s, Egyptian rocket launchers, American anti-tank recoilless rifles were all available. The market in the Saranan Afghan Refugee Camp, 48 kilometers north of Quetta, had a number of shops selling weapons. The price quoted for a Soviet supplied AK-47 was Rs. 12,000. The price for a Kalashnikov bullet was Rs. 1.50[27]. These were sold not by numbers, nor by weight but by basketful.

Where did all these weapons come from? Some were captured from the Russians and the Afghan Army; some manufactured locally; some diverted from those being received from friendly countries. With the result that what was once an essential item for the Afridis, Mohammands and Waziris in the Tribal Areas became commonplace among feudal landlords, politicians, university students and private militias in all the provinces of

Pakistan. Smugglers and 'tough guys' had more lethal weapons and were more willing to use them than the law enforcing agencies. Though much of this was due to political rivalries, the ease with which these weapons were available and kept was due to the spillover effect of the Afghan conflict.

Violations of The Border

A total of 2,819 air and ground violations took place from 1984 to 1989[28]. Out of these there were 642 such violations between 15 May, 1988 and 1 January, 1989 alone[29]. The Pakistan Air Force brought down 14 Soviet/Afghan aircraft in eight years. Three Skud missiles with a range of 480 kilometres landed in Pakistan's Kurram Agency on 2 July, 1989[30]. Another fell near the Pakistan Ordnance Factory, thirty five kilometers from Islamabad, on 10 January, 1990[31].

Social Issues

The looting and destruction of the properties of Shelter Now International (SNI), an Australian voluntary organisation for the welfare of the Afghan refugees, at the Nasir Bagh refugees camp on the outskirts of Peshawar, by about 5,000 to 6,000 refugees in April, 1990[32] showed the kind of emotions which could be aroused by the Afghan leaders and how easily they could get out of control. In this particular case the *Khatibs* (prayer leaders) made serious allegations against SNI for their programme to ameliorate the sufferings of Afghan widows. Since long the conservative Afghans had been apprehensive about its activities. Dealing with Afghan women is always a very sensitive issue amongst the Afghan *mullahs*. The special treatment being meted out to the Afghan widows and their style of living within the refugee camps encouraged by SNI workers was resented by some of the Afghan religious leaders who exhorted their congregation at Friday prayers in the Nasir Bagh refugee camp to put an end to such 'anti-Islamic' practices. So the 'believers' cut the hand that was feeding them.

A respected Afghan leader complained that some foreigners of the SNI discreetly tried to spread Christianity amongst the Afghan refugees hence the violent reaction of the *maulvis*[33]. The SNI director and his son was fired at by the Afghan refugees in Peshawar. They were blamed for propagating their religion and introducing family planning.

Law and Order

Emotional outbursts were not uncommon wherever the Afghan refugees were concentrated. It happened at Sohrab Goth, an unregistered Afghan colony on the outskirts of Karachi in 1987. There were reports that refugees were engaged in drug trafficking and other anti-social activities. It was, therefore, decided to forcibly evict them after they had refused to vacate that area voluntarily. A senior government official, was however against forcible eviction as the Afghan refugees were heavily armed and in a defiant mood. The law enforcing agencies, however, went ahead with their plans. The fully armed refugees went on a rampage the next day and carried out indiscriminate firing in the neighbouring populated locality of Karachi. They killed and wounded hundreds of innocent civilians[34]. This was an indicator of a serious threat to the law and order problem arising if the government took measures against the Afghan refugees.

Political Activities

The Afghan refugees could not remain aloof from the political activities in Pakistan. They quite naturally had political affiliations with parties which supported their cause. they attended their meetings, specially those held in Peshawar and shouted slogans in their favour. This direct involvement of the Afghan refugees in the political life of Pakistan was resented by some politicians. At a political meeting at Lahore in July, 1990 Hikmatyar and his men were given the front rows while NIFA got the rear seats. This created a certain amount of ill will between them and the organisers.

Some of the ARs were getting direct assistance from the oil rich Arab States. Situations could have developed where Pakistan's relations with some Muslim countries could be put to test if the refugees were pressed to accept a solution which may not have been to the liking of some of the Afghan leaders. With such an involvement of outside powers in matters which concerned Pakistan's security the options available to Pakistan in the formulation of its policies towards the Afghan problem were limited.

Positive Aspects of the Afghan Refugees

It is an ill-wind that blows nobody any good. The negative impact of nearly 4 million Afghan refugees on Pakistani soil had

been compensated somewhat by the closer relationship that existed between such a large number of Afghans and their Pakistani hosts. Most of them spent more than 10 years in Pakistan and some amongst them developed ties with the locals which could be enduring. The Afghan leaders and the *Mujahideen* cannot forget the succour and support they received from General Zia-ul-Haq, whose photos, adorn many shops in the refugee camps, and appear behind the trucks driven by Afghan drivers[35]. Hundreds of Afghan children have been named after the late Pakistani President. Thousands of them, now reaching adolescence, have been born and brought up in Pakistan along with Pakistani boys and girls. Many are studying in local schools and colleges. On their return to their homeland the Afghan refugees could be a contributory factor in establishing good relations between the two Muslim neighbours at the people to people level. Help and assistance at the national level does not always produce gratitude for there are many examples where the beneficiaries have turned against their benefactors. Care will have to be taken that Pakistan does not throw away this asset by following policies which may result in embittering relations between the two countries again.

The Afghan refugees filled in the vacuum that was created by the departure of hundreds of thousands of unskilled Pakistanis to the Gulf and other Arab countries. They were both hardworking and were willing to accept lesser wages and were, therefore, eagerly employed by the contractors, a fact which was resented by the local labour class. They were also contributing, though on a very small scale, to the economy of the Afghan refugees by producing consumer items in the cottage industries established for them by the various aid giving countries. The handicraft centre at the Katchi Garhi refugee camp near Peshawar, run by a German volunteer organisation called UNITED, was imparting vocational training to a large number of Afghan refugees. They were acquiring skills in weaving, carpentry and leather work. they were being taught to become motor mechanics and metal workers. The Saudi Crescent Society was training vaccinators and para-medical staff. Some of these trained refugees went out of their camps and added to the semi-skilled population at near-by Pakistani towns.

The greatest benefit, however, that Pakistan could expect to achieve from the humanitarian and other assistance they provided

to the Afghan refugees was that amongst them would emerge the future Afghan leadership who, it is hoped, would establish a government which would not only be Islamic in character but also friendly to Pakistan.

Because of the Afghan refugees Pakistan became the focus of attention of several nations who came to respect the humanitarian assistance which Pakistan was providing to the Afghan refugees.

Reconstruction

Eleven years of conflict within Afghanistan between the pro and anti-communist forces led to a tremendous loss of lives and very severe damage to the infrastructure. Nearly a million and a half Afghans died, hundreds of thousands were wounded and a large number became permanently maimed and disabled. Millions of unmarked mines lay around the countryside. Roads were destroyed, bridges blown up, houses were razed to the ground by intensive carpet bombing, water resources and irrigation channels became unusable, power lines and telephonic cables were cut, fields became fallow-not having been cultivated for over a decade. Nearly six million Afghans were forced to abandon their homes and take refuge in neighbouring lands. Another million or two became internal refugees. The intelligentsia and trained manpower emigrated to other countries.

The problems of the reconstruction of Afghanistan were colossal. It would take decades to restore normal life to the war-torn nation. The important areas which needed rehabilitation were communication facilities, agriculture, civic and public amenities, trade and commerce, rehabilitation of refugees and re-establishment of the government machinery.

The United Nations established an office for coordinating humanitarian and economic assistance programmes relating to Afghanistan in May, 1988 at Islamabad. Sadruddin Agha Khan was nominated by the Secretary General of the United Nations as the Coordinator of Operation Salam[36]. The 1990 Plan of Action of the United Nations for the reconstruction of Afghanistan was envisaged in three phases.

In Phase 1 emergency assistance was to be provided which included mine clearance, supply of food, fuel, medicine, shelter and cash. Both internal and external security was to be assured in areas were refugees were encouraged to go back to. In Phase

emphasis was to be laid on agriculture related activities including repair of roads and bridges, provision of farm power, agricultural implements, seeds, fertilisers and water. Eastablishing of institutions for long term development plans was to be done in phase 3[37].

Operation Salam was launched in May, 1988. A total of 61 projects divided into 201 sub-projects were initiated inside Afghanistan. By December, 1989, seventy three were completed, one hundred and sixteen were under implementation and twelve in the pipeline[38]. To help in the speedy implementation goods, tents and other essential items were positioned near the Pak-Afghan border.

Mine Clearance

The estimate of the number of mines lying in Afghanistan after the Soviet withdrawal varies from 3 million to 30 million[39]. The United Nations undertook a major programmes for mine awareness, mine training and mine clearance. By December, 1989, twenty thousand Afghans had been trained in mine clearance. Another 5,873 Afghan instructors were trained in Pakistan on handling of mines. Fifteen thousand more Afghans were to be imparted training in 1990. Mine clearing equipment had been procured to carry out mine clearance by mechanical means[40].

Funds

The United Nations Secretary General called for a sum of $1,116 million for the reconstruction of Afghanistan. $1,007.2 million were pledged by December, 1989. In 1990-1993 another $893 million[41] are expected which could bring the total to over $2 billion but in 1990 there was a short fall of $108.8[42] million. Countries which pledged financial support were Japan, USA, Sweden. Switzerland, Netherlands, Ireland, Belgium and Finland. USSR committed $600 million in kind. They provided food and other items the benefit of which went also to Najib and his regime.

Assistance by Pakistan

The Pakistani Government created a rehabilitation and reconstruction cell headed by Major General (retired) Agha Zulfiqar Ali who was designated as the chief coordinator. His task was to coordinate the reconstruction programmes of (1) all donor

countries and donor agencies (2) liaise with the concerned ministries of the Afghan Interim Government and (3) establish contact with the relevant departments and ministries of the Government of Pakistan. Its mandate included taking into its fold all activities in connection with reconstruction inside Afghanistan when the situated so permited[43].

Repatriation of Afghan Refugees

Between the period May, 1988 i.e: immediately after the signing of the Geneva Accord and October, 1989 a total of 809 families (4,227 persons in all) were officially reported having gone back to Afghanistan. The figure, however, seemed to have been on the lower side. When visiting the Saranan refugee camps, about 48 kilometres outside Quetta, about a 100 mud huts were seen lying empty and deserted[44]. Allowing for 7 members of the family in each mud hut approximately 700 Afghan refugees must have gone back from one camp alone. There are 74 such camps in Baluchistan. The number who have returned would, therefore, be much higher then the figure officially given. Government officials based their figures on the ration cards produced but many had sold their ration cards to other Afghan refugees who continued to draw rations for them and sold the surplus in the market[45].

The United nations Plan of Action for 1990 envisaged the return of one million refugees in that year. Certain 'zones of tranquility' had been earmarked inside Afghanistan which had been peaceful for sometime and where the local authorities were prepared to cooperate. The plan for the return of such a large number of refugees within one year was too ambitious as the movement back was to be voluntary. Breaking the inertia, an uncertain future, lack of security due to unrecorded mines, unfavourable response by local field commanders and by the Kabul regime forces were factors which inhibited the return of the refugees. Some Peshawar-based Afghan leaders also discouraged the return as they would have lost a captive voters population. Their importance in Pakistan would also have been reduced if the refugees went back to their homes. Hikmatyar mentioned four conditions in April, 1988 for the return of the Afghan refugees (1) withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan; (2) replacement of Najib by an Islamic government; (3) when fighting has ended and (4) when mines have been lifted[46]. Sayyaf was also opposed to the return of refugees.

The Government of Pakistan extended its fullest cooperation to the United Nations office for coordinating the repatriation of Afghan refugees. By 26 August, 1991 a total of 165,019 refugees[47] had returned to their homes. Still far short of the planned target.

After 11 long years donor fatigue had set in. Aid also was required elsewhere. The UNHCR decided to cut the aid to the ARs by $31 million[48]. Lack of resources forced operation Salam to abandon or scale down 57 projects[49]. With the UN and other NGOs reducing their contributions the balance had to be made up by Pakistan. It could ill-afford to do so. Left to fend for themselves the AR. could turn to committing crimes[50].

Notes

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3. Ibid.
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11. See United Nations Convention on Human Rights of December, 1948.
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13. Interview with Syed Bahauddin Majrooh at Lake Como, Italy, March, 1988.
14. Interviewed by the author on 28 November, 1989 at Islamabad.
15. Humanitarian Assistance programme for Afghan Refugees in Pakistan, Issued by the Chief Commissionerate for Afghan Refugees, Government of Pakistan, Islamabad, July, 1984, p. 8.

16. Ibid, p. 17.

17. Briefing Paper, CCAR, Islamabad, 1990.

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid.

20. Interviewed by the author.

21. BBC Interview.

22. Interviewed by the author on 6 June, 1990.

23. Interviewed by the author on 5 June, 1990.

24. Illustrated Weekly of India 1-7 October, 1989, p. 45.

25. Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad 27 August, 1989; independent sources claim that the first heroin factory was built in the Paktia province of Afghanistan by a financier of the afghan Jehed in 1978.

26. Personal Observation.

27. Interview with shopkeepers in Saranan Afghan Refugees Camp, 48 kilometers outside Quetta, 28 May, 1990.

28. Nation, 27 November, 1989.

29. Pakistan Times, 27 January, 1989.

30. Muslim, 6 July, 1989.

31. Ibid, 11 January, 1990.

32. Ibid, 30 April, 1990.

33. Narrated to the author by a well known Afghan leader (name with held) at Asia Study Centre, Islamabad.

34. Muslim 30 April, 1990.

35. Personal Observation by the author.

36. UNSG report to Security Council A/43/720, S 20230, 14 October, 1988, p. 7.

37. Operation Salam, UN Plan of Action, 1990, office of the Coordinator for United Nations Humanitarian and Economic Assistance programmes relating to Afghanistan Geneva, p. 8.

38. Ibid, p. 5.

39. Khaleej Times, 17 October, 1988;
International Defence Review, February, 1990, p. 81.

40. Operation Salam, Plan of Action 1990, p. 49.

41. Tehran Times, 16 October, 1988.

42. Operation Salam, Plan of Action, 1990, p. 25.

43. Interview with Major General Agha Zulfiqar Ali (Retd) on 10 January, 1990 at Islamabad.

44. Personal observation.

45. Interview, Commissioner Afghan Refugees, Quetta on 5 June, 1990.

46. Muslim, 19 April, 1988; Operation Salam Plan of Action 1990, p. 14.

11 Future Prospects

"Trimming your sails according to the wind does not change the port that is your destination".

Anon.

Twelve years after the Saur Revolution, the struggle for power between the PDPA and the *Mujahideen* still continued. Najib had succeeded in defying all predictions of his immediate downfall and remained in the saddle though with an uncertain future. The Hydra-headed *Mujahideen* were still speaking with different voices and had not come up with any agreed alternative to the PDPA.

The AIG was all but dead. Hikmatyar and Sayyaf, leaders who could not be ignored, had walked out of it and no longer recognised its existence. The other five were divided on the future courses of action. An election plan was announced but it was a non-starter as serious differences still remained amongst the Afghan leaders and between them and the freedom fighters inside Afghanistan. With no agreement in sight it was virtually impossible for the election schedule to be implemented in 1990. The AIG had not been able to broaden its membership as the Tehran-based Afghan *Mujahideen* continued to stay away and there was no indication that a solution acceptable to both the groups would be found in the near future.

Iran wanted to ensure that the Shias had a larger say in the future set up in Afghanistan than before and was not willing to cooperate with the AIG unless it agreed to giving the Iran-based *Mujahideen* their rightful share in the proposed shura. Tehran was trying to rectify the predominant Sunni character of the

country by enabling the Afghan Shias to play a major role in areas close to the Iranian border. Iran was also inimical to the Saudi backed Afghan leadership. It was apprehensive of the enhanced role of Saudi Arabia in Afghanistan. It was also critical of outside interference with special reference to the USA. Pakistan and Iran had drifted away slightly on how to proceed with finding a political settlement to the Afghan problem.

Holding of elections was the political objective of both the Soviet Union and the United States. Pakistan and all but one faction of the Afghans supported the holding of elections. But here again there was a divergence of views. While Washington and Moscow were aiming for general elections which would include the participation of all Afghans irrespective of their political or ideological commitments the AIG was planning to hold elections excluding the PDPA. In the former case a new elected government could replace the Soviet supported Najib administration. In the latter case, another step would be necessary to force or persuade Najib to hand over power to an elected government, in the formation of which a large section of the Afghan population had not been included.

With unprecedented developments taking place in the Soviet Union and along its periphery and with Gorbachev concentrating his efforts on restructuring the Soviet economy Moscow's interest in Afghanistan had considerably reduced. It was now willing to go along with any plan which would bring peace to that country as long as the new government did not try to stir trouble in the Central Asian Muslim Republics. The Soviet Union was no longer a superpower and did not wish to get directly involved in regional conflicts any more. A face saving device of easing out Najib politically was all that USSR would have desired.

The Gulf Crisis had overshadowed all other pending issues. The United States had got so deeply committed to the security of the Gulf oil that Afghanistan was no longer a hot topic. It was placed on the back burner. With the cost of the Gulf war having reached over $50 billion it was unlikely that the United States would continue to provide military assistance to the Afghan *Mujahideen* beyond the year 1991. Kuwait, a strong supporter of the *Mujahideen*, would not be able to spare any money as billions of dollors were needed to pay to the United States and other allies for their participation in operation Desert Storm. Money was also

needed for its own. Saudi Arabia too had spent a considerable amount of money in the Gulf War and was reluctant to continue providing further assistance to the *Mujahideen*.

Scenarios

What are then the likely scenarios in the near future. The possibility of another military coup against Najib does exit. Several attempts had been made before to overthrow him and another could be in the making. There are still a number of dissatisfied personnel in the armed forces who do not agree with Najib's policies. The *Mujahideen* and particularly the Hizb-e-Islami do have supporters within the Afghan armed forces but their numbers are not large enough to stage a counter-revolution. If at all a coup takes place the new rulers are unlikely to hand over power to any of the Afghan leaders in Peshawar. The revolutionary council is likely to include local field commanders rather than included those who sat the war out in Peshawar.

The second scenario is a military stalemate and a political impasse. This would be the worst situation for Pakistan. The Afghan refugees would not go back. The aid would be diminished and Pakistan would continue having an unfriendly border in the west. Every effort should be made by Pakistan to avoid this from happening.

The third possibility is an enhanced role of the United Nations and a determined effort by the guarantors to find a political solution to the Afghan guagmire. The main hurdle is the presence of Najib. On this issue all Afghan leaders, whether they be in Peshawar or in Tehran, are agreed. None of them are prepared to do business with him. Some progress on this had been made at the meeting between Shevardnadze and Baker at Helsinki. Further progress could not be made in this regard due to the critical situation in the Gulf.

Pakistan's Policy

General Zia's Afghan policy was clear and unambiguous. He believed in and advocated forcefully an all out support to the *Mujahideen* irrespective of the domestic costs or international ramifications with the ultimate objective of installing a pro-Pakistan Islamic government in Afghanistan. (General Zia also dreamt of a confederation with Afghanistan and Central Asia) Benazir was not in favour of seeking a military solution and had

no interest in supporting one or the other of the Afghan factions. Her attachment to the Afghan cause was peripheral. However, initially she went along with the assessment of the ISI that the *Mujahideen* would be able to topple Najib after the Soviets had withdrawan their troops.

After the failure of the Jalalabad offensive and the inability of the *Mujahideen* to achieve any significant success on the battlefield Ms. Bhutto decided to call it a day. The importance of the ISI in the Afghan conflict was downgraded with the removal of General Hamid Gul. While Benazir's administration began emphasising the futility of still seeking a military solution the army continued to insist on following a two-track policy which meant applying military pressure on Najib along with searching for political means to end the conflict.

It was for this reason that Pakistan's Afghan policy was adversely commented upon by a wide section of public opinion. "Pakistan has failed to evolve an effective policy to assist in a political solution of the Afghan problem" said Altaf Sheikh, former ambassador of Pakistan and a political analyst. Afzal Mahmood, also a former ambassador and the owner and chief-editor of the monthly magazine The Globe felt that the present policy of wait and see is making the task of a settlement to the Afghan problem more and more difficult. "Pakistan must adopt a coherent and unambiguous policy approach" said Maleeha Lodhi, editor of the daily News. Brigadier (retired) Abdur Rahman Siddiqui, the editor of the Monthly Defence Journal felt that Pakistan's policy was non-existent. To the well known journalist, Mushahid Hussain, Pakistan's Afghan Policy was adrift. Such comments were forthcoming because of the contradictory views expressed by those in authority.

Inspite of the difference between the various power centres in the government there was one issue on which there was a unanimity of view and that was the removal of Najib. Beyond this there was a difference of opinion. The President and the army wanted to work through the AIG in search for a political solution while Benazir and the Foreign Office felt that the AIG had failed to broaden its base and hence could no longer play a role in seeking a political agreement. They preferred to work through the United Nations. A fact, however, that both ignored was that Afghanistan as a nation state had almost disappeared. Najib's writ

ran only in the major cities and along roads connecting them. The Peshawar-based Afghan leaders had some say in the five provinces bordering Pakistan where low intensity conflict continued but no where else. In the remaining area local field commanders had established their own fiefdoms and would not give up their autonomy easily. Herat and the Hazarajat areas were very much under the influence of Iran who saw things differently than those in Peshawar and Islamabad. That being so a political solution acceptable to all was practically impossible.

Pakistan's Objectives

With both the external and internal factors pitted against an early settlement of the Afghan conflict Pakistan should have concentrated its efforts on the aspect which was hurting it most. While doing so the long term goals should have been kept in mind which would ensure: (1) a friendly western border; (2) consolidation of its ties with Iran and (3) improvement of relations with USSR.

Pakistan's primary objective in the circumstances prevailing at the end of 1990, when the Gulf Crisis had submerged all other regional issues, should have been the early return of the Afghan refugees notwithstanding the numerous hurdles that stood in its way. A conducive environment for the repatriation of millions of displaced persons to Afghanistan was indeed a must. It would have been morally wrong and even impractical to expect innocent men, women and children to go back to a country where war was still raging. But it was here that a objective analysis was needed of the actual conditions inside Afghanistan two years after the Soviet troops withdrawal, free from emotional attachment to the Afghan cause.

After the failure of the Jalalabad offensive the intensity of the fighting had reduced considerably. In several provinces it had died down completely. In other areas it was confined to sporadic exchanges of rocket fire and an occasional capture of an insignificant government security post or the overrunning of a *Mujahideen* stronghold. Except for the five eastern provinces close to the Pakistani border where the hard line Afghan leaders still kept up the pressure against the Kabul regime the remaining areas of Afghanistan were comparatively quiet. To wait for total peace to return to Afghanistan would be like chasing a mirage for even in the best of times the hills and valleys of the Hindu Kush

have reverberated with the sounds of bullets. Life in Afghanistan continues while tribal feuds range around them.

Some basic conditions of course had to be met before embarking on a concerted effort to return the Afghan refugees. These were: (1) Identifying areas where normalcy had been prevailing for sometime; (2) assurance by the Kabul regime to the United Nations representative that the returning refugees would not be deliberately persecuted; (3) local field commanders would be required to give a safe passage to the refugees passing through their areas; (4) marking and lifting of mines and (5) provision of shelter, food, seeds, agricultural instruments and medical facilities.

Whereas no one can deny the necessity of these conditions before expecting the refugees to go back to their homes the difference lay in whether there were areas in Afghanistan where most, if not all, of these elements were present or could be achieved with not much effort. Pakistan's primary objective should, therefore, have been to work in unison with the United Nations to encourage and persuade the Afghan refugees to go back to areas where they could do so with dignity and honour.

Firmness was needed to remove all obstacles in this regard. Afghan leaders, who were opposed to the return of the refugees till an Islamic government was established in Afghanistan, should have been 'advised' not to insist on a condition which would unnecessarily hamper the early return of the Afghan refugees. It was time for some plain speaking. They should have been told in no uncertain terms that Pakistan could not bear the burden of the Afghan refugees for an indefinite period more so when financial assistance from friendly countries was fast diminishing. While forcing the Afghan refugees to return was neither desirable nor possible, a firm and coordinated policy vigorously followed would have seen a substantial progress in the repatriation plan launched by the United Nations.

The second major objective was the establishment of a friendly government in Afghanistan. The emphasis here should have been on promoting friendly ties with any government the people of Afghanistan chose for themselves rather than thrusting rulers on them which would carry a label 'made in Pakistan'. Nothing angers the Afghans more than being dictated upon by an outsider be he a benevolent Muslim neighbour. Without taking sides it was

incumbent for Pakistan to insist on the *Mujahideen* to broaden their base so that a government in Kabul could be formed which would be acceptable to the majority. This was an exercise which Pakistan could not undertake by itself. The cooperation of Iran was necessary. Pakistan's long term goal of establishing strong links with southwest Asian countries would be facilitated if a political settlement of the Afghan problem was arrived at which took into consideration the interests of Iran as well.

Its objective should also be to settle the Afghan issue in a manner which would assist in improving ties with the Soviet Union. It would be swimming against the current if Pakistan were not to do so as the two erstwhile rival superpowers had decided to bury the hatchet and were now cooperating with each other in setting regional conflicts.

Options

With these short terms and long terms objectives in mind and in the environment prevailing within and outside the country towards the end of 1990 what were Pakistan's options to achieve the goals vis-a-vis Afghanistan.

The military option was obviously out. Pakistan, of course, could not prevent the *Mujahideen* from continuing to overthrow Najib by force. What was more in the realm of realpolitic was for Pakistan neither to have encouraged nor discouraged the *Mujahideen* from doing so. It would have been in Pakistan's interest to support the proposal of negative symmetry and an eventual cease-fire with a UN supervised status-quo.

A more determined effort to seek a political solution, after it was clear that a military stalement existed inside Afghanistan, should have been made. Differences within the government should have been removed and a clear cut Afghan policy should have been stated and followed relentlessly. There were a few proposals and plans on the anvil which could have been supported or modified to be in line with Pakistan's national interest.

Proposals and Plans

The first concrete proposal for a political solution to the Afghan conflict after the signing of the Geneva Accord was put forward by Diego Cordovez on 9 July, 1988. The plan envisaged the formation of a national government of peace and reconstruction. This

transitional government would have consisted of independent and impartial prominent citizens of Afghanistan. The list was to be prepared in consultation with the Kabul regime and the *Mujahideen*. It was to take effect on 1 September, the date on which a cease fire was to become effective. The national government so formed would be responsible for conducting the affairs of the state and ensuring conducive conditions for the return of the Afghan refugees and the holding of a *Loya Jirga*. All political parties would be allowed to function.

Neither Najibullah nor President Zia-ul-Haq accepted the formation of such an impartial provisional administration. The proposal was therefore put in cold storage.

Edward Shevardnadze later came forward with his 10-point programme for the solution of the Afghan crisis which was repeated verbatim by Najibullah. It included inter-alia, a cease fire, status-quo, an international conference on the future of Afghanistan, UN supervised elections and a transfer of power. None of these proposals were given any importance by the United States. The *Mujahideen* rejected them outrightly and Pakistan showed no interest in pursuing any of the ten proposals.

The Shevardnadze - Baker meeting at Irkutsk on 1 August, 1990 helped to narrow the gap between Washington and Moscow on how to create conditions for the holding of elections in Afghanistan. The major hurdle was the presence of Najibullah. USA had been insisting that he must be removed as he had been installed by the Soviets against the wishes of the majority of the citizens. Being the head of state he controlled all the security and intelligence agencies which would help him in influencing the results of the proposed elections. The last proposal in this connection which had yet to be accepted by the United States was that Najibullah should hand over powers to an interim administration while remaining a nominal head of state. Further meetings between Baker and Shevardnadze were postponed due to the Gulf Crisis.

The fourth attempt at resolving the Afghan issue was made by Pakistan when it managed to hammer out an election plan with the remnants of the AIG. Pir Syed Ahmad Gailani, Chief Justice and Chief Election Commissioner of the moth-eaten Afghan Interim Government announced the election plan on 22 May, 1990. The main ingredients of the plan were: (1) each electoral

constituency to elect or nominate ten members for the *Loya Jirga*. The body to decide the form of selection of these ten citizens would be the local shura consisting of field commanders, religious scholars, heads of tribes and respected elders; (2) the *Loya Jirga* would then elect one member of each constituency as a member of the parliament (Wolesi *Jirga*); one from each constituency as a member of the provincial assembly and the remaining eight members would form the local *Jirgas* and (3) the leader was to be elected by a simple majority.

The AIG election plan excluded the PDPA as only a Muslim who is not or has not been a member of the PDPA could be proposed as a leader.

Elections were to be held in refugees camp, and in areas inside Afghanistan under the control of the *Mujahideen*. The OIC was to be requested to supervise elections with the assistance of the United Nations Organisation in areas controlled by the Kabul regime. The Iran-based *Mujahideen* were requested to participate in the elections but they were not prepared to do so. No progress was reported on the election plan till August, 1991.

In trying to achieve the long term objective of ensuring a friendly western border Pakistan had to play its cards very deftly as there were numerous hurdles which had to be crossed, the biggest of which was the disunity amongst the Afghan leaders. No political initiatives could be taken unless it was clear as to who infact represented the anti - Najib elements. Without getting them together on the same platform it would have amounted to supporting one faction against the other. This would have been counter-productive as those not favoured by Pakistan would continue to remain unfriendly to it even after some solution to the Afghan problems was found.

The task of uniting the *Mujahideen* could have been given to the former monarch. Both the superpowers and Najibullah had, off and on, accepted that Zahir Shah could play a role in a transfer of power to a more representative government in Kabul. Pakistan had also initially probed into this option but later gave up the idea because of the bitter opposition to Zahir Shah's return by several of the *Mujahideen* parties including those based in Tehran.

Excluding the PDPA in meaningful talks on a political settlement would not lead to peace in Afghanistan. Even General

Zia had proposed a power sharing formula between the various groups struggling for power in Afghanistan. Pakistan chose to place all its eggs in the AIG basket instead.

Towards the end of 1990, Pakistan had a new set of rulers. Mian Nawaz Sharif was now the Prime Minister. His Afghanistan policy, initially was tailored along the lines followed by his mentor, the late General Zia-ul-Haq's two track policy i.e: applying military pressure on the Kabul regime while working towards a political solution. Slowly the emphasis changed it became evident that the United States and other Western countries were losing interest in continuing to provide military support to the Afghan *Mujahideen*. Humanitarian assistance to the Afghan refugees was also being substantially reduced.

It was prudent on the part of the government of Pakistan, to now give greater priority to a political settlement. The Five-Point UN proposal which envisaged a ceasefire; stoppage of military aid to the Afghans by both USSR and USA; formation of a transitional broad-based government, elections under UN supervision and the return of the Afghan refugees was accepted. Emissaries were sent to Riyadh, Tehran, Washington and Moscow to assess the response from these capitals. All those directly concerned with the Afghan problem (except a few hardlined Peshawar-based Afghan leaders) were all in favour of resolving the issues politically.

A number of visits by the Afghan leaders to Tehran paved the way for a formal meeting at Islamabad on 29 July, 1991 between Dr. Ali Akber Vilayati, Iranian Foreign Minister and Akram Zaki, the Secretary General Foreign Affairs of Pakistan. The meeting was attended by most of the Peshawar-based Afghan leaders. Even Hikmatyar sent his representatives. Yunis Khalis and Sayyaf, however, stayed away. A joint press conference indicated the unanimity of views which were arrived at between Pakistan, Iran and the Afghan *Mujahideen* (both Tehran and Peshawar-based). Hikmatyar, who so far, was not showing any interest in the UN Plan, decided not to oppose it. The *Mujahideen* accepted the UN plan with some reservations. The main bottle neck remained, that of the presence and role of Najibullah. The Afghan leaders were still not willing to have any dealing with him or with the communists in Afghanistan.

With Pakistan and Iran, redoubling their efforts towards uniting the Afghan leadership and finding a political solution some light at the end of the tunnel, therefore, is not visible - More

so because of the proposed stoppage of supply of weapons by USSR and USA to the Kabul regime and the *Mujahideen* with effect from 1st January, 1992.

The tripartite talks between Pakistan, Iran and the *Mujahideen* held at Islamabad and Tehran have risen hopes for arriving at a peaceful settlement of the Afghan power in the foreseeable future. Although the hardliners refused to participate in these parleys, a shift in the attitude of the other *Mujahideen* leaders was discernible. Contrary to what they had been saying before they agreed to discuss the five point UN peace plan with Secretary General Perez de Cueller. They also had no hesitation in going to Moscow and meeting the Soviet leaders.

Pakistan too no longer insisted on achieving a consensus amongst the Peshawar based *Mujahideen* leaders and was willing to go along with the views of the majority.

As the Afghan conflict entered its fourteenth year prospects of peace returning to Afghanistan in the near future seemed remote. The thirteen-years long war had heightened the rivalry and bitterness between the tribes, clans and families to such an extent that blood would continue to flow in the streets for some time to come. The power struggle did not end with the Soviets withdrawing their troops; nor would the guns fall silent by replacing Najib by some other Afghan leader. There is no one amongst the present leadership who could prevent the feuds which were bound to follow.

Afghanistan will remain split into multiple centres of power with a loose central authority. Pakistan will have to cope as best as it can with that situation. Friendship with whatever government emerges in Afghanistan should be an important element of Pakistan's foreign policy. Flexibility and pragmatism would be necessary without deviating from the primary objectives of the early return of the Afghan refugees and ensuring a friendly western border.

Appendix - I

Afghanistan-USSR Friendship Treaty, 1978

A Treaty signed at Moscow on December 5, 1978, by L.I. Brezhnev and N.M. Taraki; entered into force on January 7, 1979. The text of the Treaty of Friendship, Good-Neighbourliness and Co-operation between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan, is as follows:

"The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan.

Reaffirming fidelity to the purposes and principles of the Soviet-Afghan Treaties of 1921 and 1931, which laid the foundations for friendly and good-neighbourly relations between the Soviet and Afghan peoples and which respond to their fundamental national interests. Desting to consolidate in every way possible the friendship and all-round co-operation between the two countries.

Resolved to develop the social and economic achievements of the Soviet and Afghan peoples, to safeguard their security and independence and to work steadfastly for the unity of all forces striving for peace, national independence, democracy and social progress. Expressing their firm determination to contribute to the consolidation of peace and security in Asia and throughout the world, to the development of relations between States and to the strengthening of fruitful and mutually beneficial co-operation in Asia, and attaching great importance to the further consolidation of the contractual and juridical basis of their mutual relations, reaffirming their fidelity to the purposes and principles of the Character of the United Nations.

Have decided to conclude this Treaty of Friendship, Good-neighbourliness and Co-operation and have agreed as follows:

Art. 1

The High Contracting Parties solemnly declare their determination to consolidate and deepen the unshakable friendship between the two countries and to develop co-operation in all fields on the basis of equality of rights, respect for national sovereignty and territorial integrity, and non-interference in each other's internal affairs.

Art. 2

The High Contracting Parties shall take steps to consolidate and broaden the mutually beneficial co-operation between them in the economic field and the scientific and technological field. To that end, they shall develop and consolidate co-operation in the fields of industry, transport and communications, agriculture, the utilization of natural resources and the development of the power industry and in other economic fields and shall assist in the training of national personnel and in planning for the development of the national economy. The parties shall expand their trade on the basis of the principles of equality, mutual benefit and most-favoured-nation treatment.

Art. 3

The High Contracting Parties shall promote the development of co-operation and of the exchange of experience in the fields of science, culture, the arts, literature, education, health, the press, radio and television, the cinema, tourism and sports and in other fields.

The Parties shall encourage the expansion of co-operation between their organs of State power and public organizations, enterprises, and cultural and scientific institutions for the purpose of promoting a deeper knowledge of the life, work, experience and achievements of the peoples of the two countries.

Art. 4

The High Contracting Parties, acting in the spirit of the traditions of friendship and good-neighbourliness and in the spirit of the Charter of the United Nations shall consult with each other and shall, by agreement, take the necessary steps to safeguard the security, independence and territorial integrity of the two countries.

In the interest of strengthening their defensive capacity, the High Contracting Parties shall continue to develop their co-operation in the military field on the basis of the relevant agreements concluded between them.

Art. 5

The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics respects the policy of non-alignment pursued by the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan, that policy being an important factor for the maintenance of international peace and security. The Democratic Republic of Afghanistan respects the policy of peace pursued by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, aimed at strengthening friendship and co-operation with all countries and peoples.

Art. 6

Each of the High Contracting Parties solemnly declares that it will not enter into military or other alliances or participate in any groups of States or in actions or measures directed against the other Party.

Art. 7

The High Contracting Parties shall continue to do everything in their power for the defence of international peace and the security of peoples, for the intensification of the process of international detente, for its extension to all regions of the world, including Asia, for its realization in concrete forms of mutually beneficial co-operation between States and for the settlement of international disputes by peaceful means. The two Parties shall actively promote the cause of general and complete disarmament, including nuclear disarmament, under effective international control.

Art. 8

The High Contracting Parties shall promote the development of co-operation between Asian States, the establishment of relations of peace, good-neighbourliness and mutual trust between them and the creation of an effective system of security in Asia on the basis of the joint efforts of all the States of the continent.

Art. 9

The High Contracting Parties shall continue their steadfast struggle against the intrigues of the forces of aggression and for the final elimination of colonialism and racism in all their forms and manifestations.

The Parties shall co-operate with each other and with other peace-loving States in supporting the just struggle of peoples for their freedom, independence, sovereignty and social progress.

Art. 10

The High Contracting Parties shall consult with each other on all important international questions relating to the interests of the two countries.

Art. 11

The High Contracting Parties declare that their obligations under currently

valid international treaties do not conflict with the provisions of this Treaty, and they undertake not to conclude any international agreements inconsistent with this Treaty.

Art. 12

Questions that may arise between the High Contracting Parties with regard to the interpretation or application of any provision of this Treaty shall be settled on a bilateral basis, in a spirit of friendship and mutual understanding and respect.

Art. 13

This Treaty shall remain valid for a term of 20 years from the date of its entry into force.

Unless one of the High Contracting Parties, six months before the expiry of the above-mentioned term, declares its desire to terminate the Treaty, it shall be extended for an additional term of five years, and thereafter it shall be similarly extended until such time as one of the High Contracting Parties, six months before the expiry of the five-year term then in progress, gives notice in writing of its intention to terminate the Treaty.

Art. 14

If one of the High Contracting Parties, during the 20-year term of validity of the Treaty, wishes to terminate it before the expiry of the said term, it must, six months before the date on which it intends to terminate the Treaty, give the other High Contracting Party notice in writing of its desire to terminate the Treaty before the expiry of its term and it may regard the Ivaty as terminated as from the date so determined.

Art. 15

This Treaty is subject to ratification and shall enter into force on the date of the exchange of the instruments of ratification, which shall take place at Kabul. This Treaty has been drawn up in duplicate in the Russian and Dari languages, both texts being equally authentic".

Extracts of UN Secretary Council Resolution on Afghanistan - 5 January, 1980

More than 50 nations on January. 3-4 signed a motion calling for an urgent meeting of the UN Secretary Council to "examine the situation in Afghanistan and its consequences for peace and international security". They included 10 Islamic nations, namely Bahrain, Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Malaysia, Oman, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Senegal and Turkey. France, which for January held the presidency of the Secretary Council, was the only Western country which did not sign the motion.

The Security Council accordingly met on January 5, and after two days of debate voted on January 7 (the day on which the final membership of the Council was determined) on a resolution sponsored by Bangladesh, Jamaica, Niger, Philippines, Tunisia and Zambia, which "deeply deplored" the Soviet armed intervention in Afghanistan and called for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Soviet forces. After a debate in which Afghanistan and Vietnam expressed support for the Soviet position, the resolution was approved by the votes of 13 Security Council members (the six sponsors together with China, France, the United Kingdom and the United States as four of the five permanent members and also Mexico, Norway and Portugal) to two (East Germany and the Soviet Union); however, the negative vote of the Soviet Union (the fifth permanent member) represented a vote of the resolution.

Following the January 7 vote the Security Council on January, 9 approved by 12 votes to two (Soviet Union and East Germany), with one abstention (Zambia), a procedural resolution (i.e. not subject to vote) to move the Afghanistan question to the General Assembly.

Source: Keesing's Contemporary Archives, page 30236, May 9, 1980.

Resolution ES-6/2[1]

On the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security

The General Assembly,

Taking note of Security Council resolution 462 (1980) of 9 January, 1980, calling for an emergency special session of the General Assembly to examine the question contained in document S/Agenda/2185.

Gravely concerned at the recent developments in Afghanistan and their IMPLICATIONS for international peace and security.

Reaffirming the inalienable right of all peoples to determine their own future and to choose their own form of government free from outside interference.

Mindful of the obligation of all States to refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of any State or in any other manner inconsistent with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

Recognizing the urgent need for immediate termination of foreign armed intervention in Afghanistan so as to enable its people to determine their own destiny without outside interference or coercion.

Noting with profound concern the large outflow of refugees from Afghanistan.

Recalling its resolutions on the strengthening of international security, on the inadmissibility of intervention of their independence and sovereignty and on the principles of international law concerning friendly relations and co-operation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

Expressing its deep concern at the dangerous escalation of tension, intensification of rivalry and increased recourse to military intervention and interference in the internal affairs of States, which are detrimental to the interests of all nations, particularly the Non-Aligned Countries.

Mindful of the purposes and principles of the Charter and of the responsibility of the General Assembly under the relevant provisions of the Charter and of Assembly resolution 377 A (V) of 3 November, 1950.

1. Reaffirms that respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every State is a fundamental principle of the Charter of the United Nations, any violation of which on any pretext whatsoever is contrary to its aims and purposes;

2. Strongly deplores the recent armed intervention in Afghanistan, which is inconsistent with that principle;

3. Appeals to all States to respect the sovereignty, territorial integrity, political independence and non-aligned character of Afghanistan and to refrain from any interference in the internal affairs of that country;

4. Calls for the immediate, unconditional and total withdrawal of the foreign troops from Afghanistan in order to enable its people to determine their own form of government and choose their economic political and social systems free from outside intervention, subversion, coercion or constraint of any kind whatsoever;

5. Urges all parties concerned to assist in bringing about speedily and in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter, conditions necessary for the voluntary return of the Afghan refugees to their homes;

6. Appeals to all States and National and International Organizations to extend humanitarian relief assistance with a view to alleviating the hardship of the Afghan refugees in co-ordination with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees;

7. Requests the Secretary-General to keep Member States and the Security Council promptly and concurrently informed on the progress towards the implementation of the present resolution;

8. Calls upon the Security Council to consider ways and means which could assist in the implementation of the present resolution.

7th Plenary meeting, 14 January, 1980

OIC Resolution No. 1/EOS

The Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan and on its ensuing effects

The First Extraordinary Session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers meeting in Islamabad, Islamic Republic of Pakistan, from 8-10 Rabi Al Awal, 1400. (27-29 January, 1980).

In pursuance of the principles and objectives of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference emphasizing the common objectives and destiny of the peoples of the Islamic Nation;

Recalling, in particular, the basic principles of the Non-Aligned Movement of which Afghanistan is a founding member;

Expressing its deep concern at the dangerous escalation of tension, intensification of rivalry and increased recourse to military intervention and interference in the internal affairs of states, which are detrimental to the interests of all nations particularly the Islamic States;

Affirming that the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan constitutes a violation of its independence, and aggression against the liberty of its people and a flagrant violation of all internal covenants and norms, as well as a serious threat to peace and security in the region and throughout the world;

Expressing the determination of the Governments and peoples of Member States to reject all forms and types of foreign occupation and expansion and the race for spheres of influence thereby strengthening the sovereignty of peoples and the independence of states;

Seriously concerned over the Soviet armed intervention in Afghanistan and the effect of this interference on the will of the Muslim people of Afghanistan to exercise their right to determine their political future.

Considering that the continuing presence of Soviet troops in Afghanistan, their attempt at imposing the fait accompli and the military operations of these troops against the Afghan people flout international covenants and norms and blatantly violate Human Rights;

Reaffirming the determination of Islamic States to pursue a non-aligned policy in respect of superpower conflict and to protect Muslim people from the adverse effects of the cold war between these States;

Fully aware of the immense financial burden borne by neighbouring countries of Afghanistan, in particular the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, as a result of the asylum it provides to hundred of thousands of Afghani people, old men, women and children driven away by the Soviet military occupation;

1. Condemns the Soviet Military aggression against the Afghani people, denounces and deplores it as a flagrant violation of international laws, covenants, and norms, primarily the Charter of the United Nations, which condemned this aggression in its resolution No: ES-6/2 of 14 January, 1980, and the Charter of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, and calls upon all peoples and Governments throughout the world to persist in condemning this aggression and denouncing it as an aggression against Human Rights and a violation of the freedoms of people, which cannot be ignored;
2. Demands the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all Soviet troops

stationed on Afghani territories, and reiterates that Soviet troops should refrain from acts of oppression and tyranny against the Afghan people and their struggling sons, until the departure of the last Soviet soldier from Afghan territory, and urges all countries and peoples to secure the Soviet withdrawal through all possible means;

3. Suspends the membership of Afghanistan in the Islamic Conference;

4. Invites the member states to withhold recognition to the illegal regime in Afghanistan and sever diplomatic relations with that country until the complete withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan;

5. Calls upon all member states to stop all aids and all forms of assistance given to the present regime of Afghanistan;

6. Urges all states and people throughout the world to support the Afghan people and provide assistance and succour to the refugees whom aggression has driven away from their homes;

7. Recommends to all member states to affirm their solidarity with the Afghan people in their just struggle to safeguard their faith, national independence and territorial integrity and to recover their right to determine their destiny;

8. Solemnly declares its complete solidarity with the Islamic countries neighbouring Afghanistan against any threat to their security and well being and call upon States of the Islamic Conference to resolutely support and extend all possible cooperation to these countries in their efforts to fully safeguard their sovereignty, national independence and territorial integrity;

9. Authorises the Secretary General to receive contributions from member states to be established by him in consultation with the states concerned.

10. Calls upon member states to envisage through appropriate bodies not to participate in Olympic Games being held in Moscow in July, 1980 unless the Soviet Union in compliance with the call of the U.N. General Assembly and the Islamic Conference withdraws all its troops forthwith from Afghanistan;

11. Mandates the Secretary General of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference to follow up the implementation of these resolutions and report thereon to the Eleventh Session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers.

OIC Resolution No. 19/11-P

On the situation in Afghanistan

The Eleventh Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers meeting in Islamabad, Islamic Republic of Pakistan, from 2-7 Rajab, 1400, H. (17-22 May, 1980).

Expressing its Deep Conviction that termination of Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan and respect for the political independence, sovereignty and non-aligned status of Afghanistan and for the inalienable national right of the Afghan people to choose their own political and socio-economic system and form of government without outside interference of coercion, are imperative for bringing about conditions of peace and stability in the region and for defusing current international tensions;

Seriously concerned at the sufferings of the Afghan people and at the continuing influx of Afghan refugees into Pakistan and Iran;

Deeply conscious of the objectives enshrined in the Charter of the Islamic Conference requiring the Member States to strengthen the struggle of all Muslim peoples with a view to safeguarding their dignity, independence and national rights;

Re-affirming the determination of the Islamic States to pursue a policy of non-alignment and to oppose Superpower interference in the affairs of Islamic countries;

Taking note of the report of the Secretary General of the Organisation regarding the implementation of the Resolution 1/EOS of the Extraordinary Session of the Islamic Conference;

Expressing the hope that the Non-Aligned Movement will play and active role in the search for a comprehensive solution to the Afghanistan crisis that would be consistent with this resolution in such a manner as would consolidate peace and stability in the area and in the world, and would confirm the principles and objectives of non-alignment;

Urging all the States to respect the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of Afghanistan, as well as the non-aligned status of that country and its Islamic identity:

1. Reaffirms Resolution No. 1/ESO on the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan and on its ensuing effects, adopted at the Extraordinary Session of the Islamic Conference;
2. Expresses deep concern at the continued Soviet military presence in Afghanistan;
3. Reiterates its demand for the immediate, total and unconditional withdrawal of all Soviet troops stationed on the territory of Afghanistan;
4. Reaffirms respect for the inalienable national right of the people of Afghanistan to determine their own form of Government and choose their economic, political and social system free from outside interference or coercion;
5. Strongly urges the creation of the right conditions that would permit the early return of the Afghan refugees to their homeland in security and honour;
6. Reiterates its appeal to all States and peoples to provide assistance in order to alleviate the sufferings of the Afghan refugees;

7. Decides, in order to give effect to the provisions of this resolution, to establish a committee comprising the Secretary General and the Foreign Ministers of Pakistan and Iran to seek ways and means, including appropriate consultations, as well as the convening of an international conference under the auspices of the United Nations or otherwise, for a comprehensive solution of the grave crisis with respect to Afghanistan, provided that it is not inconsistent with the Resolution.

UN General Assembly Resolution 36/37

On The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security

Date: 20 November, 1980 Meeting: 70

Vote: 111-22-12 (recorded) Draft: A/35/L. 12 and Add. 1

The General Assembly,

Having considered the item entitled "The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security",

Recalling its resolution ES-6/2 of 14 January, 1980 adopted at its sixth emergency special session,

Reaffirming the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the obligation of all States to refrain in their international relations from the threat of use of force against the sovereignty, territorial and political independence of any State,

Reaffirming further the inalienable right of all peoples to determine their own form of government and to choose their own economic, political and social system free from outside intervention,

Gravely concerned at the continuing foreign armed intervention in Afghanistan, in contravention of the above principles, and its serious implications for international peace and security,

Deeply concerned at the increasing outflow of refugees from Afghanistan,

Deeply conscious of the urgent need for a political solution of the grave situation in respect of Afghanistan,

Recognizing the importance of the continuing efforts and initiatives of the Organization of the Islamic Conference for a political solution of the situation in respect of Afghanistan:

1. Reiterates that the preservation of the sovereignty, territorial integrity, political independence and non-aligned character of Afghanistan is essential for a peaceful solution of the problem;

2. Reaffirms the right of the Afghan people to determine their own form of government and to choose their economic, political and social system free outside intervention, subversion, coercion or constraint of any kind whatsoever;

3. Calls for the immediate withdrawal of the foreign troops from Afghanistan;

4. Also calls upon all parties concerned to work for the urgent achievement of a political solution and the creation of the necessary conditions which would enable the Afghan refugees to return voluntarily to their homes in safety and honour;

5. Appeals to all States and National and International Organizations to extend Humanitarian relief assistance, with a view to alleviating the hardship of the Afghan refugees, in co-ordination with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees;

6. Express its appreciation of the efforts of the Secretary-General in the search

for a solution to the problem and hopes that he will continue to extend assistance, including the appointment of a special representative, with a view to promoting a political solution in accordance with the provisions of the present resolution, and the exploration of securing appropriate guarantees for non-use of force, or threat of use of force, against the political independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and security of all neighbouring States, on the basis of mutual guarantees and strict non-interference in each other's internal affairs and with full regard for the principles of the Charter of the United Nations;

7. Requests the Secretary-General to keep Member States and the Security Council concurrently informed of progress towards the implementation of the present resolution and to submit to Member States a report on the situation at the earliest appropriate opportunity;

8. Decides to include in the provisional agenda of its thirty-sixth session the item entitled "The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security".

RECORDED VOTE ON RESOLUTION 35/37:

In favour: Albania, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bahamas, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belgium, Botswana, Brazil, Burma, Burundi, Canada, Central African Republic, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Costa Rice, Democratic Kampuchea, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Fiji, France, Gabon, Gambia, Federal Republic of Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Iceland, Indonesia, Iran, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Ivory Coast, Jamaica, Japan Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Luxembourg, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Morocco, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Portugal, Qatar, Rwanda, Saint Lucia, Samoa, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Somalia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Thailand, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United Republic of Cameroon, United Republic of Tanzania, United States, Upper Volta, Uruguay, Venezuela, Yugoslavia, Zaire, Zambia.

Against:

Afghanistan, Angola, Bulgaria, Byelorussia, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, Democratic Yemen, Ethiopia, German Democratic Republic, Grenada, Hungary, Laos People's Democratic Republic, Madagascar, Mongolia, Mozambique, Poland, Sao Tome and Principe, Seychelles, Syria, Ukraine, USSR, Viet Nam.

Abstaining:

Algeria, Benin, Cape Verde, Chad, Congo, Cyprus, Finland, Guinea-Bissau, India, Mali, Nicaragua, Zimbabwe.

Absent:

Bhutan, Bolivia, Dominica, Iraq, Libya, St. Vincent, Yemen.

Rumania announced that it was not participating in the vote.

Chronology of Events

6th Century BC

The land astride the Hindu Kush was the domain of Cyrus and Darius the Great of Persia. For the next two centuries Persian influence was not only dominant but exclusive.

4th Century BC

Alexander the Great leaves behind Greek settlements in Bactria (present day northern Afghanistan).

2nd Century BC

King Ashoka the Great, Grandson of Chandragupta Maurya, spreads Buddhism in the region.

1st Century AD to 3rd Century AD

Kushan Dynasty (culturally Buddhists) holds sway.

4th Century AD to 9th Century AD

Hindu Shahi Kingdoms flourish in this part of the world.

5th Century

The Greek and Buddhist cultures fuze into the world famous Gandhara civilisation to include parts of present day Afghanistan and north western Pakistan.

7th Century AD

The Arabs, after overthrowing the Persian Sasanid Empire, occupy Herat and the areas around it.

9th Century AD to 10th Century AD

The Persian Saffarids recapture Herat and Balkh succeeded by the Samanids and later by the Turks.

10th Century AD to 12th Century AD

Afghan are first referred to as a people in the 10th Century.

Ghazni, part of the Persian Samanid Empire is governed for them by the Turkish Mamlukes.

Sabaktagin, a Turkish slave, overthrows his Turkish master in 977 and establishes the Ghazni Dynasty. His son Mahmud gained renown by attacking India several times, destroying the temple at Somnath and spreading Islam in today's Pakistan.

12th Century AD

Ghazni sacked by Alauddin Ghori in 1150 . A Tajik from the city of Ghor (north central Afghanistan). He forced his captives to carry a pack of soil each to Ghor. Then butchered them and built victory towers with mortar mixed with their blood.

13th Century AD

Chengiz Khan raids the area and destroys everything in his path.

14th Century AD to 15th Century AD

The famous Muslim traveller and historian Ibn-e-Batuta crosses the Hindu Kush Mountain Range in 1337 and gives it its present name as several Hindu slaves died in the snow covered mountains.

Taimur Lang (Tamerlane), based in Samarqand, crosses the Oxus River in 1379 and occupies Herat.

16th Century AD

Zaheeruddin Babar, a decendent of Taimur, captures Kabul in 1504 and establishes the Moghul Dynasty. Moves on to India in 1525.

Present day Afghanistan shared between the Moghuls of India, the Kings of Persia and the Amir of Bukhara.

1707

The last Moghul Emperor Aurangzeb dies and the decline of the Moghul Empire, which included Kabul, begins.

1708

The Gilzais of Qandahar throw out the Persian yoke and a few years later advanced into Persia. The Durranis took Herat from the Persians and overran Khorasan (Persia). Both of them were expelled by Nadir Shah of Persia.

1736

Nadir Shah conquers Qandahar with the help of Abadali mercenaries. Three years later he captures Delhi and returns with the famous Koh-e-Noor diamond.

1747

Nadir Shah is assassinated, Ahmad Khan, a Durrani Pushtun of the Barakzai tribe, serving under Nadir Shah as the head of an Afghan contingent fought his way back from Meshed (Persia) to Qandahar where he was proclaimed Shah.

1747

The Afghan Kingdom was established by Ahmad Shah Abadali with its capital at Qandahar were it remained till 1773. Ahmad Shah later captured Kabul from the decaying Moghul Dynasty and raided India nine times.

1761

Ahmad Shah Abadali defeats the Mahrattas at the battle of Panipat. This marked the greatest extent of Ahmad Shah's Empire in India which included Kashmir, Punjab and parts of Baluchistan. He assumes the title of Durr-e-Durran (Pearl of Pearls).

1769

Ahmad Shah and the Amir of Bukhara agree on the Amu Darya (Oxus) as the border between the newly established Kingdom of Afghanistan and the Kingdom of Bukhara.

1773

Ahmad Shah Durrani dies. The Durrani Empire begins to disintegrate.

1791

Catherine the Great of Russia makes plans to reach the warm waters of the Arabian Sea.

1798

Punjab finally lost by the Afghans to the Sikhs.

1803

Shah Shuja is the new ruler at Kabul.

1805

Persian attempt to capture Herat fails.

1807

Alexander II of Russia and Napoleon plan a joint Russian - French invasion of India.

1809

The British envoy in Kabul and Shah Shuja sign a defence alliance.

1813

The Sikhs capture the Attock Fort from the Afghans.

1816

The Persians once again try to capture Herat and fail.

1818-1835

Afghanistan splits into virtual independent states due to a weak ruler (Ayub son of Taimur Shah).

1819

Ranjit Singh captures Kashmir from the Afghans.

1823

Ranjit Singh occupies Peshawar, the winter capital of the Durrani Kingdom.

1826

Dost Mohammad, a Durrani Pushtun of the Mohammadzai clan, ruler of Ghazni becomes the Amir of Kabul. He is the founder of the Mohammadzai Dynasty. Modern day Afghanistan emerges.

1834

Dost Mohammad defeats Shah Shuja and captures Qandahar. Shah Shuja is exiled to India.

1837

Persians laid siege to Herat for 3 years acting as proxies of Russia who provided arms, troops and money. The attack failed because of British support to the Afghans.

1838

Sikhs capture Bannu. Tripartite Treaty signed between Shah Shuja, Sikhs and the East India Company placing Shah Shuja again on the throne. British break off relations with Dost Mohammad.

1839

First Anglo-Afghan War to prevent the Russians from moving into Afghanistan. British occupy Qandahar, Ghazni and Kabul. Shah Shuja placed on the throne by the British. Dost Mohammad made to surrender and exiled to India.

1842

Shah Shuja is assassinated. The British force, then in Kabul, had to retreat. All but one was massacred on the way. Only Doctor Brydon reached Jalalabad then occupied by British troops under General Sale.

1843

Dost Mohammad returns to Kabul and rules for another 21 years.

1849

Dost Mohammad made an attempt to recapture Peshawar but was defeated by the British who had by then annexed Punjab.

Dost Mohammad conquers the area north of the Hindu Kush and subdues Uzbeks, Turkomen and Tajiks with the support of the British who wanted to keep the Russians out of that area.

1855

Dost Mohammad captures Qandahar from the British.

1856

The Persians capture Herat. British in retaliation occupy the Persian part of Busher. Persians withdraw from Herat.

1863

Dost Mohammad Captures Herat.

Dost Mohammad dies.

His son Sher Ali ascends the throne.

1869

Subsidy given to Dost Mohammad by the British is also extended to Sher Ali. He receives Rs. 120,000 along with small arms and artillery pieces.

1878

Sher Ali invites a Russian mission to Kabul but refuses a British mission to enter Afghanistan.

1878

Second Anglo-Afghan War because of Sher Ali's overtures to Russia.

1879

Sher Ali dies. His son Yaqub Khan becomes the new ruler.
Lord Roberts takes Qandahar and enters Kabul. Khurram, Khyber and Michini placed under British occupation and lost by the Afghans.

1879

Treaty of Gandamak signed between the British and the Afghans. The Amir cedes Pishin, Sibi and Khyber to the British.

1880

Amir Abdur Rahman, the greatest of all Afghan rulers, is placed on the throne at Kabul by the British after having been 12 years in exile in Russia.

British troops remained in Qandahar.

1883

British grant a subsidy of Rs. 12 lac to Amir Abdur Rahman.

1885

Russians occupy Panjdeh in northern Afghanistan.

1891

Boundary between Persia and Afghanistan delineated by General C.A. Maclean.

1893

Sir Mortimer Durand, British Foreign Secretary demarcates the boundary between Afghanistan and British India which became known as the Durand Line.

Amir Abdur Rahman accepts the boundary and renounced all claims to territories beyond it. His subsidy is raised to Rs. 20 lac annually.

The boundary between China and Afghanistan is demarcated by the British and Russian commissioners.

1897

Britain enters into a treaty with the Russians delineating the Oxus River as the boundary between Afghanistan and Russia.

1901

Amir Abdur Rahman dies. His eldest son Amir Habibullah succeeds him on the throne. He remains loyal to the British.

1903

Mc Mohan demarcates the border of Afghanistan with Persian Siestan.

1905

Amir Habibullah ratifies the Durand Line. A Young Afghan movement develops which came under Russian influence and sets as its goal national independence and radical reforms.

1907

Convention at St. Petersburg between the British and the Russians concerning Tibet, Persia and Afghanistan. Russia agreed that Afghanistan was outside its sphere of influence.

1919

Amir Habibullah is assassinated.

1919

Sardar Amanullah ascends the throne at Kabul. Declares jehad against the British. General Nadir Khan marches to Thal (British India). General Wali heads a mission to Moscow to seek aid.

1919 (3 May)

Third Anglo-Afghan War, initiated by the Afghans, begins and ends on 3 June, 1919.

1919 (8 August)

Treaty of Rawalpindi signed between the British and King Amanullah of Afghanistan. Amanullah accepted the Durand Line. "The Afghan Government accepts the Indo-Afghan frontier accepted by the late amir": - Article V of the Treaty of Rawalpindi.

1920 (13 September)

British bans arms shipment to Afghanistan through India. Amanullah signs a treaty with Russia in Kabul by which USSR was to give one million gold Roubles to Afghanistan annually and in addition several aircraft and small arms was provided.

1921

King Amanullah signs a Treaty of Friendship with Soviet Union.

1924

Rebellion in Khost (eastern Afghanistan). The Soviets came to the rescue of the Kabul government by bombarding the rebels in Khost into submission.

1925

First direct Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Retaliation for Uzbeks using Afghan territory as a base for raids into Soviet territory.

1926

Treaty of Neutrality and Mutual Non-Aggression signed between Afghanistan and Soviet Union - called the Paghman Pact.

1929 (January)

Habibullah Kalakani, known as Bacha Saqa, (son of a water carrier), a hitherto unknown Tajik, led a small army into Kabul and replaced King Amanullah who went into exile in Italy.

1929 (17 October)

General Nadir Khan, who came from a junior branch of the royal family, seized Kabul and proclaimed himself king. Bacha Saqa caught and executed on 3 November.

1929

Soviets invade Afghanistan in support of Ghulam Nabi Charkhi, Afghanistan's ambassador to Moscow who wanted to help Amanullah to regain his throne. Soviet troops withdrew after meeting stiff resistance.

1931

Soviet-Afghan Friendship and Non-Aggression Treaty signed.

1933

Nadir Shah assassinated. Zahir Shah (19) becomes ruler of Afghanistan.

1936

Commerce Treaty with USSR ensuring among other things transit rights for Afghanistan across Soviet territory signed.

1940

Trade Agreement between Afghanistan and Soviet Union.

Zahir Shah declares neutrality in World War II

1946

US rejects Afghan Government's request for loan.

1947 (13 June)

Afghanistan sends note to British and Indian Government that Afghans living between British India and Indo-Afghan border must be given an opportunity to decide whether to join Pakistan, Afghanistan, India or remain independent.

1947 (30 September)

Afghanistan casts a negative vote for Pakistan's entry into the United Nations (the only country to do so).

(20 October)

Afghanistan withdraws its negative vote.

1948

Afghanistan requests for arms aid from USA. Request not accepted. Abdul Ghaffar Khan arrested in Pakistan. Kabul begins propaganda on 'Pushtunistan'.

1949

Loya Jirga repudiates old frontier agreements with Britain. Pakistan retaliates by halting movement of goods from Karachi to Afghanistan. Pakistan bombs areas inside Afghanistan.

1950

Treaty of Peace and Friendship signed with India.

1951

Afghanistan again asks USA for arms assistance. Liaqat Ali Khan, the first Prime Minister of Pakistan, assassinated by Saeed Akber, an Afghan living in exile in Pakistan. (17 October).

1953

Sardar Mohammad Daud Khan becomes Prime Minister of Afghanistan.

1954

Afghans make a final bid for US arms aid. Soviet aid of $3.5 million received. (27 January).

1955

Pakistan joins the Baghdad Pact.

(15-19 December)

Nikita Krushchev and Nicholai Bulganin visit Kabul and pledge long term economic assistance of $100 million. Support 'Pushtunistan' demand. Afghan-Soviet Non-Aggression Treaty renewed. Daud opens up negotiations of military aid from Soviet Union.

Loya Jirga gives approval for a plebiscite for 'Pushtunistan' and for finding alternate arrangements to counter US arms aid refusal.

Daud warns Pakistan of grave consequences if areas of NWFP are included in the One-Unit Scheme.

Pakistan Embassy attacked. Four Pakistani officials killed.

Diplomatic relations with Afghanistan broken by Pakistan.

1956

Daud signs a major arms agreement with Soviet Union.

US offers to construct Qandahar Airport.

1958

USA to build Spin Boldak-Qandahar - Kabul highway.

1959

President Dwight Eisenhower visits Kabul.

1960

Afghanistan protests against U-2 flights through its air space.

Krushchev visits Kabul and offers to finance the entire 2nd Five Year Plan provided Afghanistan accepts advisers in all ministries.

1961 (May)

Afghan irregular and army troops enter Pakistan to support Bajour tribes against Pakistan. Diplomatic relations with Afghanistan broken off. Pakistan closes border for shipment of goods to Afghanistan. Afghan nomads prevented from entering Pakistan.

1963

Daud eased out and Dr. Yusuf becomes Prime Minister.

1964

New Constitution promulgated granting the right to form political parties.

1965

Peoples Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) formed. Elections held on a non-party basis.

New Electoral law providing for universal direct vote by secret ballot for all Afghan men and women over 20 years goes into effect.

Mianwandwal becomes Prime Minister.

1966

President Ayub Khan stops over in Kabul.

Kabul-Qandahar Highway built by USA opened. Chinese agree to build six projects.

1967

PDPA splits into two factions Khalq and Parcham. King Zahir Shah visits Pakistan.

Protocol on export of gas to USSR signed.

1968

USA grants $4.6 million loan for the Helmand Valley Irrigation Project.

1969

Elections held.

1970

Major demonstration by Ulema held against a poem by Barq Shafie showering God's blessings on Lenin.

1972

Famine in Afghanistan, 100,000 died.

1973

Sardar Mohammad Daud Khan overthrows King Zahir Shah who is exiled to Rome.

1974

200 Ikhwan-ul-Muslameen members arrested.

Gulbadin Hikmatyar and Burhanuddin Rabbani escape to Pakistan.

1975

President Podgorny of USSR visits Kabul and extends 1931 Treaty of Friendship by another 10 years.

1976 (June)

Prime Minister Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto of Pakistan visits Kabul.

(August)

Daud visits Pakistan. Offers to accept Durand Line if National Awami Party leaders of Pakistan are released.

1977

General Mohammad Zia-ul-Haq stops over in Kabul on his way to Tehran.

Daud visits Tehran. Iran agrees to give $3.7 billion credit to Afghanistan.

1978 (March)

Daud visits Islamabad. Shahanshah of Iran visits Kabul.

(17 April)

Mir Akber Khyber, a prominent Parcham leader is assassinated. Mammoth funeral procession chant slogans against the government and USA. Mass arrests follow.

(27 April)

Saur Revolution.

Daud, his family and cabinet ministers assassinated. Nur Mohammad Taraki takes over as head of state.

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Mr. Mohammad Khan Junejo, Former Prime Minister of Pakistan.

Mr. Agha Shahi, former Foreign Minister of Pakistan.

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Mr. Zain Noorani, former Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Government of Pakistan.

General Mohammad Iqbal Khan, Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, Joint Staff Headquarters, Pakistan Armed Forces.

General Mirza Aslam Beg, Chief of Army Staff, Pakistan Army.

General Khalid Mahmud Arif, Chief of Staff to General Mohammad Zia-ul-Haq.

Lieutenant General Syed Refaqat, Chief of Staff to General Mohammad Zia-ul-Haq.

Brigadier Amir Gulistan Janjua, Governor, North West Frontier Province.

Lieutenant General Hamid Gul, former Director General, Inter Services Intelligence Directorate (ISI), Government of Pakistan.

Ambassador Riaz Piracha, former Ambassador of Pakistan to Afghanistan later Foreign Secretary of Pakistan.

Ambassador Altaf A. Sheikh, former Ambassador of Pakistan to Afghanistan.

Mr. Tanvir Ahmad Khan, Foreign Secretary of Pakistan, former Ambassador of Pakistan to Iran.

Ambassador Abdus Sattar, Ambassador of Pakistan to Soviet Union, earlier Foreign Secretary of Pakistan.

Ambassador Mufti Abbas.

Air Chief Marshal Zulfiqar Ali Khan, former Ambassador of Pakistan to USA.

Mr. Fida Yunus, Pakistan's Charge d' Affairs in Kabul, Lt. Gen. Jamal Said Mian, Prominent citizen of Parachinar, a tribal belt along the Pak-Afghan border.

Mr. Roedad Khan, former Secretary, Ministry of Interior
Major General Agha Zulfiqar Ali, Chief Coordinator, Afghan Refugees.

Brigadier Said Azhar, former Chief Commissioner, Afghan Refugees. Islamabad.

Mr. Taj Mohammad, Chief Commissioner, Afghan Refugees, Islamabad.

Lieutenant Colonel Abdur Rahman Ahmadzai, Commissioner, Afghan Refugees, Quetta.

Commissioner Afghan Refugees, Peshawar.

Lieutenant Colonel Abdul Majid Babar, Joint Secretary, Ministry of States and Frontier Regions (SAFRON), Government of Pakistan.

Dr. Ijaz Shafi Gilani, Institute of Policy Studies and Chief of the Asia Study Centre, Islamabad.

Mr. Abbas Maliki, Director, Institute of Political and International Studies, Tehran.

Professor Yuri Gankovsky, Institute of Oriental Studies, Moscow.

Afghan leaders.

Maulvi Yunus Khalis, Hizb-e-Islami.

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Mr. G.M. Kernienko.

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